Staff Ride Handbook for the Niagara Campaigns, 1812-1814

Richard V. Barbuto

Combat Studies Institute Press
US Army Combined Arms Center
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Foreword

The Combat Studies Institute is pleased to publish this staff ride handbook for the War of 1812 in the Niagara region. Between 1812 and 1814, the US Army fought a series of actions centered on the thirty-seven mile river boundary separating the United States from what was then the British province of Upper Canada. These battles are interesting for a variety of reasons. The War of 1812, during which the Niagara frontier saw the majority of ground combat, is often cited as an example of national unpreparedness leading to a series of military defeats and a failure to accomplish the national goals. The conflict also saw the transformation of the US Army from a frontier constabulary into the tactical equal of one of the most professional armies of its time – the British Army in Canada. The tactical actions then showed a slow maturation of capabilities on the US side. This evolution was difficult, with more defeats than victories accruing to American arms. Yet through it all, the emergence of effective and determined leaders and trained organizations established a legacy still valid for today's fighting forces. Indeed, the lineage of several Army organizations begins with service at Chippawa and Lundy's Lane. Graduates of the fledgling US Military Academy who were present on these battlefields, although few in number, established by word and action that institution's creed of Duty, Honor, Country. The Army that emerged from this conflict started on a path to professionalization that we continue to travel today.

This handbook provides the framework for staff rides that can impart insights relevant to the modern military professional. Along with introductory sections that explain the background of the war, and the tactics and weapons of both armies, are chapters that provide detailed guidelines on how to structure and conduct a staff ride in this region. Each chapter provides descriptions of the "stands," or stops on the battlefield, where one can observe the terrain, read a narrative account of the action, and consider the factors that shaped decisions made by key leaders on that spot and on others nearby.

Those readers familiar with the Combat Studies Institute's other handbooks will note two innovations with this volume. First, instead of covering a single campaign or battle, this study addresses three distinct and successive campaigns. By including all three campaigns in a single work, the individual or organization can develop a staff ride that traces the development of both national strategy and operational proficiency over time as well as examines the many factors that led to victory and defeat on the battlefields of the Niagara region. Second, while written directions are included here, this volume does not use strip maps to direct the staff

rider from stand to stand. Many of the stands are located on well-marked, urban terrain or historical sites, easily accessible and often within sight of one another.

A final note: as the campaigns (and thus the staff rides) crossed international boundaries still in force today, staff riders should consider passports as "mission-essential equipment."

Colonel Thomas E. Hanson
Director
Combat Studies Institute

Acknowledgements

2014 marks the end of the three-year bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812 on the Niagara River. I first proposed this staff ride project to the Combat Studies Institute in 2003, and received a strong endorsement from William Glenn Robertson, director of CSI, and Lieutenant Colonel Steven E. Clay, the executive officer. Armed with Robertson's guide, *The Staff Ride* (CMH Pub 70-21) and a file cabinet full of dissertation notes, I prepared an outline and a research plan. Steve worked with me to get a suitable outline to accommodate three separate campaigns in a single volume, not the typical CSI staff ride style. CSI generously granted funding for a foray into the Niagara region to identify stands and routes. My spouse, Ann, took countless photos (as she has done on our several trips back to get the vistas and perspectives just right).

On that first trip, I linked up with Ron Dale, at that time Superintendent of the Niagara National Historic Sites of Canada. Ron spent hours with me walking the terrain around Fort George. He pointed out the remains of the American trench lines as well as a gravestone upon which American cooks slaughtered and carved livestock. The talks with Ron encouraged me to dig deeper into the journals and letters left by the American, British, and Canadian participants in the most active theater of the war. Over the years, Ann and I and often our sons returned to gather more information and for Ann to take even more photographs.

As my investigation proceeded, I consulted two noted Canadian scholars of the conflict, Donald E. Graves and Major John R. Grodzinski. Don and John were most supportive and generously provided sources, insights, and perspectives. Over the years I have come to appreciate the scholarship and enjoy the comradeship of these two gifted colleagues.

The Writers Group at the Department of Military History, headed by Ethan S. Rafuse, was particularly helpful in reviewing early drafts. Those "second sets of eyes" assisted me in maintaining perspective, tone, clarity, and readability. I was happy to incorporate their many suggestions, tactfully offered, to the final product.

This handbook includes three images never before published. David Bennett and David Geister generously offered the print of the First US Infantry at Lundy's Lane. Geister rendered Bennett's precise research into uniforms and equipment capturing the drama of this hard-fought battle. Don Troiani's depiction of mounted riflemen, that most readily identifiable of all American soldiers, crashing through British lines excites the senses and stirs the blood. One cannot visit these sites dispassionately. The combatants risked everything in support of their families, communities, and

nations. Finally, Larry Selman's rendering of Major Henry Leavenworth leading his soldiers at Chippawa is perhaps the most accurate depiction of that battle in the last two centuries. My thanks to all the researchers and artists who have brought these evocative images of combat to life.

As the project came together, Don Wright of CSI shepherded the draft through the editorial process, providing suggestions that have improved the product. He was always able to resolve the many production issues that are invisible to the reader. CSI integrated the text and supporting images and diligently unified the format. Any flaws of fact or interpretation are mine alone.

Finally, and most importantly, my love and appreciation to Ann—my spouse, editor, photographer, and battlefield companion whose steadfast encouragement brought this work to completion.

Richard V. Barbuto
17 September 2014
The 200th anniversary of the Sortie from Fort Erie

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Chapter 1

War of 1812 Armies

American Forces

The US Army in 1812

On 1 January, 1812, the regular army was composed of only eleven regiments: seven of infantry, one each of riflemen and light dragoons, and two of artillery. Of the two regiments of artillery, one was of heavy artillery and the other of light artillery. However, all of the companies of light artillery served as infantry because the War Department judged that horses were too expensive to maintain in peacetime. The authorized strength of the army was nearly ten thousand, but only about six thousand men were on active service. These veteran regiments were broken up into smaller elements, often as small as a single company, and scattered in posts and fortifications on the periphery of the country or along the major rivers in the interior. This miniscule force was barely able to defend the nation from intermittent native uprisings and that was only possible with an augmentation of militia or volunteers. The regular army was totally inadequate to project itself into Canada to seize the major cities of Montreal or Quebec.

Congress ordered an expansion of the regular army in the early months of 1812, prior to the declaration of war. Congress authorized ten more regiments of infantry, a second regiment of light dragoons, and two more regiments of artillery for a total authorized strength of approximately 27,000 officers and men. However, immediately prior to the declaration of war in June of that year, fewer than 12,000 had been commissioned or enlisted. Raw recruits and officers accounted for half of the army. While the recently mustered men marched off to training camps closer to the border, the logistical system was enormously strained to provide weapons, ammunition, food, uniforms, and necessary equipment such as tents and cooking pots. Despite obvious shortfalls in preparedness, President James Madison and many of his supporters in Congress were confident of a quick victory. Congress answered Madison's message on the state of

affairs with Great Britain with a declaration of war that the president signed on 18 June 1812.

Raising the Army

Now that war was a fact, Congress moved quickly to expand the forces necessary to invade Canada and to protect the coast from attacks by the Royal Navy. Land forces consisted of three components: the regular army, the militia, and the volunteers.

Within a week of the declaration of war, Congress enlarged the regular army. Congress standardized the organization of the infantry regiment and in doing so, increased the infantry branch to twenty-five regiments. Prior to the war, a full term of enlisted service was for five years. Congress offered new recruits a term of five years or for the duration of the war. Recruits received a bounty of sixteen dollars. Upon completion of their enlistment, they earned three months' pay and 160 acres of land. Still, the inducement of land and money was insufficient to fill the ranks, and regiments were chronically short of soldiers.

Officers for the regular army were another story. Men of the social elite, or those with such pretensions, made known their availability to their congressmen. Each state delegation to Congress offered up lists of potential officers to the president and the secretary of war. Madison and Secretary of War William Eustis then selected from the pool of candidates and returned a list of nominations to Congress for approval. While some of the nominees had prior commissioned service or were currently commissioned and seeking promotion in a new regiment, the vast majority of nominees had never served in wartime. While well-intentioned and patriotic, the typical new officer was entirely devoid of knowledge of his new profession. However, the president took pains to ensure that each recently-created regiment had a few experienced officers.

Congress understood that it would take many months to train and equip all the new regiments of the regular army. That body put undue confidence in the militia to defend the nation while the regulars made ready for offensive warfare. The Uniform Militia Act of 1792 required that all able-bodied white male citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five be enrolled in the militia of their state. Each militiaman was to provide his own weapon—a musket,

and bayonet. Both the federal and state governments maintained arsenals to equip the militiamen too poor to own a private weapon. While returns were never kept up to date, it is believed that more than 700,000 men were enrolled in the various state and territorial militias.

While the militias of the several states varied widely in quality, none were ready for war. Men were assigned to local units, and the governor designated the officers. Training was conducted at the most basic level, and weapons and equipment were largely unavailable or unserviceable. Congress, in the years running up to the war, regularly refused to reform the militia. In 1812, the militia served as a pool of manpower and an unsure reminder of the republican ideal of the citizen soldier.

In April 1812, Congress called up 100,000 militiamen to be held in readiness for possible duty. The War Department allocated shares of the total number to the various states. New York, for example, was required to call up 13,500 and to send six hundred of these immediately to the Niagara Frontier. New York's militia establishment was formidable, on paper at least. The Empire State boasted 159 infantry and nine cavalry regiments. Governor Daniel Tompkins of New York, acting as commander-in-chief of the state militia, ordered the formation of twenty regiments of "detached militia" to meet the federal requirement. He allocated quotas to the divisions, brigades, and regiments of the state's troops. Regimental commanders, in turn, sub-allocated quotas to the company commanders who dutifully assembled the militia.

Company commanders first asked for volunteers to meet the quota. Failing to raise the entire quota, the company commander was authorized to draft the remainder. Often this was done by lottery. Draftees were allowed to find substitutes. Typical practice required a citizen to serve only one tour of duty and he could not be called to the colors again until every other militiaman had either served or provided a substitute. Designated militiamen were ordered to an assembly point, and on a specified day, the company commanders mustered the men into service. The six-month tour of duty began at this formal muster. Each company then marched to a regimental "rendezvous" where state quartermasters issued weapons and equipment.

New York, like other states, was also home to volunteer companies, which in many ways were operated like private clubs. Those social elite with a hankering for the trappings of the military formed units which the governor recognized as being adjunct to the militia organization. Volunteers provided their own uniforms, weapons, and equipment. They elected their own officers which the governor commissioned into the militia. New York boasted dozens of companies of riflemen, artillery, dragoons, and hussars. The volunteer companies trained more frequently than the common militia and were clearly more martially-spirited. When the governor called for men to fill the state quota, several volunteer companies joined the regiments of detached militia in their entirety.

While many in the detached militia had volunteered for service, they were not volunteers in the legal sense of that term. The third component of the force Congress foresaw to win the war was the federal volunteers. On 6 February 1812 Congress created the US Voluntary Corps. Congress authorized the president to accept into military service up to 50,000 federal volunteers. These troops would serve for twelve months and be virtually indistinguishable from regulars. Unlike the regulars who enlisted for five years, the one-year volunteers did not receive a land bounty upon completion of service. And unlike the militia, the federal volunteers could be ordered to serve outside the national borders.

The president selected the officers, often on their presumed ability to raise the unit. While the Voluntary Corps fell far short of its goal of 50,000, nonetheless thousands signed up. The federal volunteers offered all the adventure of wartime service with only a one-year commitment. While militia units consisted of white males, federal volunteer units readily accepted blacks, Indians, and non-citizens. Each volunteer received a uniform allowance and the units often selected unique uniforms. Some of the pre-war volunteer companies mustered in as federal volunteers and kept their uniforms and distinctive titles. Federal authorities aggregated companies of federal volunteers into battalions and regiments. During the war, units such as the Albany Volunteers, the New York Greens, or the Pittsburgh Blues fought shoulder to shoulder with regulars and acquitted themselves well.

The War Department established procedures for recruiting for the regular army. Initially, the Secretary of War assigned direction of the recruiting effort to Colonel Alexander Smyth, the inspector general. Smyth ordered newly commissioned officers to recruiting duty, even before they were assigned to a specific regiment. General officers directed recruiting departments which were further sub-divided into recruiting districts commanded by field grade officers. District commanders received newly commissioned company-grade officers and assigned them to recruit in specific cities or towns. As the captains and lieutenants persuaded men to join the colors, they selected the most fit to serve as non-commissioned officers (sergeants and corporals). Once one hundred men agreed to serve, they were mustered into service and marched to a training camp. The War Department designated a captain to command this newly-raised company. Typically, but not always, this was the captain most closely associated with recruiting the new soldier.

Congress approved Smyth's promotion to brigadier general in July 1812 and Eustis ordered him to join the army at the training camp at Greenbush, near Albany, New York. The office of the Adjutant General assumed direction of recruiting. The War Department assigned officers and companies to their regiments and by August, a major shift in recruiting took place. The secretary of war turned over responsibility for recruiting to the colonels commanding the regiments. The War Department staff established a geographic area for each regiment as its recruiting grounds. As much as possible, an infantry regiment would recruit within a single state or two states at most. The light dragoon, rifle, and artillery regiments, however, drew from much larger areas. For example, the Second Artillery recruited from below the Maryland-Pennsylvania border while the Third Artillery recruited above that line. The regimental commander now controlled his officers, and it was he who decided which officers commanded companies and which remained on recruiting duty.

Recruiting for the regular army remained sluggish throughout the war, and this had repercussions at the regimental level. The need for soldiers was intense in the summer and fall of 1812. As soon as an officer recruited a full company, the company was assigned to join its regiment or to garrison a threatened location. This meant that

regiments rarely, if ever, had all their companies and officers in one location. It was typical that only a few companies served together under their regimental colonels. Detached companies might be considerable distances away and under the local control of a different regimental commander. Likewise, the main body of the regiment might be commanded by the colonel or lieutenant colonel. Other officers were scattered on recruiting duty or detached and serving on the brigade staff. Some few served as aides to generals or on special assignment. Often, orphan companies were temporarily amalgamated under whatever field grade officer might be available.

This situation, present throughout the war, leads an unwary student to a faulty understanding of reports and orders of battle. A report noting the presence or activities of the 15th Infantry, for example, virtually never refers to the entire regiment. It refers to those companies of that regiment who are collocated and acting under one commander. It might also refer to an orphan company of the 23rd Infantry or the Light Artillery temporarily amalgamated with the 15th. This grouping might be loosely termed a regiment or a battalion. The term battalion referred to a grouping of companies, usually under command of a field grade officer.

As the war progressed, Congress adjusted the composition of the regular army twice more. In January 1813, Congress created twenty more infantry regiments. At first, Congress directed that the men recruited for these new regiments would commit to only one year of service. However, later Congress decreed that soldiers would enlist for the usual term or five years or the duration of the war.

On 30 March 1814, Congress added four more infantry regiments. Congress, recognizing the yeoman service of the Regiment of Riflemen, added three more regiments to that specialized corps. However, several regiments were consolidated. The companies of the two regiments of light dragoons were combined into a single regiment of eight companies. Congress also consolidated the sixty companies of the three heavy artillery regiments into the Corps of Artillery of forty-eight companies. The Regiment of Light Artillery was left intact.

Organization

American land forces were organized similarly to their European counterparts. The infantry regiment consisted of ten companies organized as a single battalion, although the War Department had flirted briefly with a two-battalion regiment. According to an Act of Congress on 26 June 1812, the regiment consisted of a small regimental headquarters and ten identical companies. The regimental commander was assisted by a lieutenant colonel, a major, an adjutant, quartermaster, paymaster, surgeon and two surgeon's mates. Rounding out the regimental staff was the sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, and two musicians. Each company was composed of a captain, first lieutenant, second lieutenant, ensign, four sergeants, six corporals, two musicians and ninety privates. On 3 March 1813, Congress added a second major to the regimental headquarters and a third lieutenant and an additional sergeant to each company. The additional officer in each company was to make it easier to support an active recruiting effort without seriously degrading leadership in the field. The infantry regiment was established with a full authorization of 1,091 men. The lone rifle regiment was organized similarly with ten companies. However, each company had only 68 privates.

The two regiments of light dragoons were not organized uniformly. The First Regiment of Light Dragoons had eight companies and an authorized strength of 672 men. The Second Regiment of Light Dragoons was organized into twelve companies with a total authorization of 1,006 soldiers. While the term "troop" was sometimes used, the term company referred to a unit commanded by a captain in the dragoons and artillery as well as the infantry. The junior commissioned officer in a dragoon company was called a cornet, not an ensign. In medieval times, an ensign carried the unit flag while a cornet played a trumpet or bugle. The Act of 3 March 1813 added a major to each dragoon regiment and a third lieutenant and a sergeant to each company. Now the two regiments were authorized 689 and 1,030 men respectively. The horsemen rarely ever conducted a battlefield charge. Their chief duty was to provide rapid courier service and security between the widely dispersed elements of the army.

The Regiment of Light Artillery was conceptually designed as a horse artillery unit in which every soldier rode. That ideal was never realized although some companies might have operated in that mode for part of the war. In fact, several companies of the light artillery operated for the duration as infantry companies. Each of the ten companies of light artillery had a captain, first lieutenant, and second lieutenant. The company had four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, eight artificers and twelve drivers. The Congressional Act of 3 March 1813 added a third lieutenant and a sergeant to each company and a second major to the regimental headquarters.

The organization of the three heavy artillery regiments was never standardized. All three regiments were composed of twenty companies. However, those of the First Regiment of Artillery had only eighty-one soldiers in a company while the companies of the Second and Third Regiments had ninety-five soldiers. The companies of the three heavy artillery regiments could serve in three capacities. First, a company could serve as the garrison of a fixed fortification with the obvious task of manning the guns. Second, a company could serve as field artillery. No attempt was made to mount every soldier and the gunners would walk along the guns as they were pulled by caissons. There was no fixed organization of a field artillery company. The company might serve three guns and a howitzer, but other combinations existed as well. Third, a company of artillerists could serve as infantrymen. Companies of the Third Artillery in particular served throughout the war as infantrymen and established a fine reputation for discipline and hard fighting.

Engineers were staff officers and consolidated into the professional but small Corps of Engineers. There were a mere seventeen engineers serving on active duty when war broke out, but that number grew as the war progressed. Graduates of West Point dominated the Corps of Engineers although that school had only come into existence in 1802. Prior to the war, these engineers were occupied with designing and building fortifications, usually to protect harbors. As the War Department designated armies and military districts, it assigned engineers to serve on the staff of the commanding generals. Besides building fortifications, engineer officers also conducted reconnaissance or opened roads.

As might be expected, there were formations larger than the regiment. Congress appointed general officers to command armies such as Major General Henry Dearborn who commanded the Northern Army. The army commander had authority to organize brigades and to appoint commanders, typically brigadier generals. A brigade was a grouping of two to four infantry regiments. Artillery and dragoons were often consolidated under the army commander and allocated to the brigades for specified missions. Army commanders could also assign a geographic area to a subordinate officer and with it came authority to direct the activities of all units within or passing through that area. For example, Dearborn appointed Colonel Alexander Macomb to command the garrison at Sackett's Harbor as well as the stretch of coast of Lake Ontario from Oswego to the city of Ogdensburg on the Saint Lawrence River.

In 1813, the War Department did away with the army as an organization and instead divided the United States into nine (and eventually ten) military districts. A general officer commanded each district as well as all the regulars, volunteers, and federalized militia within its borders. The Ninth Military District in upstate New York and Vermont was the scene of intense fighting and home to large proportion of the nation's fighting strength. In 1814, Secretary of War John Armstrong allocated two major generals to this district and assigned division commands to each of them. Major General Jacob Brown commanded the Left Division operating to the west of Ogdensburg while Major General George Izard commanded the Right Division on Lake Champlain and the border with Lower Canada. Both Brown and Izard organized brigades within their respective divisions.

Logistics

The logistical organization of the US Army was faulty and support to the soldiers in the field suffered as a result. Prior to the declaration of war, all logistical functions were in the hands of the secretary of war and a few civilian agents in the field. The War Department set up a number of permanent supply points under the direction of a Superintendent of Military Stores. Agents at the supply points were civilians. In 1812, Congress authorized an expansion

of the logistical structure to meet the needs of an enlarged army operating across the border. Now, the secretary of war was served by three new specialized offices which were responsible for acquiring, storing, moving, and issuing weapons, ammunition, equipment, and clothing. Unfortunately, Secretary of War Eustis was unable to clearly delineate which new office did what or how they interfaced.

Congress established the Purchasing Department directed by the Commissary General of Purchases. Eventually, the competent Callender Irvine accepted that duty and located his operation in Philadelphia. Irvine was charged with procuring all arms, equipment, uniforms, and supplies. The federal arsenals at Harper's Ferry, Virginia and Springfield, Massachusetts produced more than 58,000 firearms during the war. This and the production of private gunsmiths met the needs of the new forces. Irvine let contracts for camp equipment and other supplies and opened a large production line for uniforms to clothe the thousands joining the ranks. Blue wool was expensive and militia units bought much of what was available. Undaunted, Irvine ordered the production of uniform coats and pantaloons in brown, black, green, and gray. Recruits were initially issued white linen or cotton uniforms and, unfortunately, many new troops were deep into the winter before warm wool uniforms arrived.

Congress appointed Morgan Lewis, Revolutionary War veteran and former governor of New York, to be the Quartermaster General with the rank of brigadier general. Congress also authorized creation of the Quartermaster Department and a number of subordinate quartermaster officer positions. As a general rule, each regiment had a quartermaster officer integral to the regiment and appointed by the regimental commander. However, above the regimental level, quartermaster officers were detailed from the regiments but were answerable to both the Quartermaster General and to the general officer on whose staff they served. Congress gave the Quartermaster Department a charter which overlapped that of the Purchasing Department. The Quartermaster Department was also responsible to procure equipment and supplies. Eventually, the two departments reached an accommodation. The Commissary General of Purchases had primary responsibility of procuring supplies and equipment. However, when units in the field lacked necessary commodities, the local quartermaster officer was authorized to purchase them.

Figure 1. The New Recruit, 1812.

Source: Courtesy of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Bureau of Historic Sites. Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Sackets Harbor, July 2012.

A further and exceedingly important responsibility of the Quartermaster Department was to accept material from the Purchasing Department and to transport and issue it. Transportation was clearly

the bottleneck in the logistics system. The fighting fronts were largely well away from the source of supplies and equipment. Roads in the United States were generally abysmal, and it was often difficult to find wagons, teams, and teamsters willing to travel near an active front. Water transportation was at least ten times less expensive than movement by wagon and, as much as possible, quartermasters contracted for water movement.

The path of commodities from New York City to the Niagara Frontier illustrates the difficulties. Boats moving by sail or oar fought against the current of the Hudson River to Albany. From there, boats could move cargoes westward up the Mohawk River with a few portages to bypass rapids. Crews transferred cargoes to wagons for the long portage to Lake Oneida. Then the boats moved down the Oswego River and off-loaded cargoes at the top of the rapids known as Oswego Falls. Vast quantities of goods stacked up until wagons arrived to move the cargoes around the rapids. Then the various commodities were trans-loaded once again into bateaux for the trip downriver to the port city of Oswego on Lake Ontario. Cargoes were loaded onto lake vessels and moved westward toward Fort Niagara. If the destination was the village of Buffalo on Lake Erie, then goods moved either by wagon along the Niagara River or by a combination of boat and wagon up river and around Niagara Falls. The trip from New York was about 470 miles and took months to complete.

Congress rounded out the three specialized logistics offices with the creation of the Ordnance Department with Colonel Decius Wadsworth appointed as its chief. Its function was to receive, store, and repair cannon, ammunition, gunpowder, gun carriages, ammunition wagons, and all things required to equip a battery of guns. As soon as Congress declared war, the Purchasing Department let contracts to private foundries to produce guns of all sizes to equip field batteries and permanent fortifications.

The process of equipping and supplying an artillery unit provides an example of how the three departments interfaced. The functions of acquiring guns, ammunition, and equipment, storing them, issuing and moving them, was shared among the three departments. The Purchasing Department procured cannon, gunpowder, harnesses, gun carriages, and wagons. These items were then turned

over to the Department of Ordnance for temporary storage. When Colonel Wadsworth issued artillery equipment, it was the responsibility of the Quartermaster's Department to transport the equipment to the using unit. Unfortunately, at the highest levels, there was little coordination among these three departments, which resulted in ineffectiveness and inefficiencies in every theater.

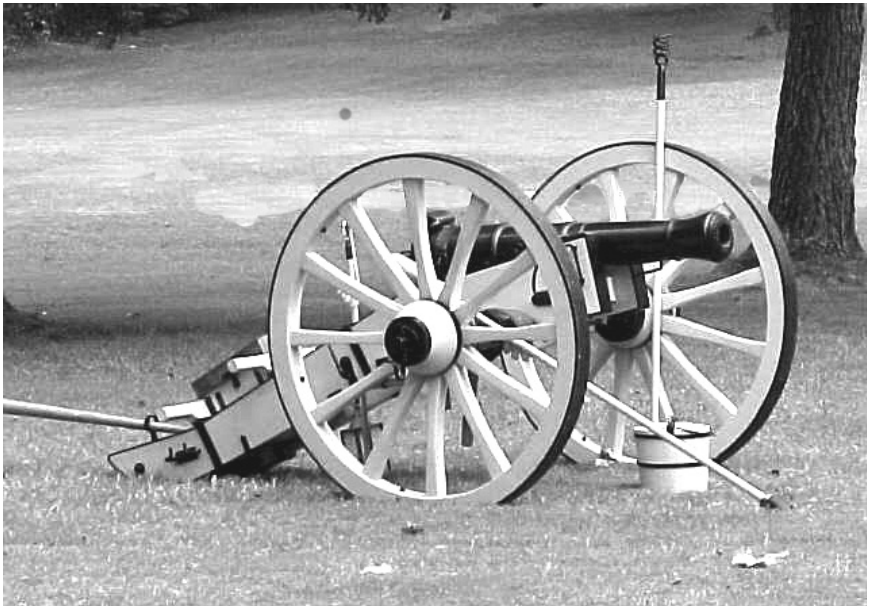

Figure 2. Six-pounder Gun.

Source: Photo courtesy of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Alabama.

An army moves on its stomach. Unfortunately, subsistence, the supply of food, was chronically mishandled. The Secretary of War issued contracts for subsistence. Each appointed contractor was required to serve all army forces within an assigned geographic area. Contractors were not required to cross international borders or to provide food outside of their assigned areas. Throughout the war, rations were in short supply, arrived late, and were often spoiled upon arrival. Despite numerous complaints by general officers, the system of feeding the army was not improved until after the war was ended.

The US Army operating along the Niagara River was irregularly supplied. Especially in 1812, but throughout the war, opera-

tions were limited by the inability to feed the troops or to keep them supplied with ammunition. British forces were likewise constrained by an inefficient system made worse because Canada could not produce enough food to feed both the people and the army. Virtually every commodity needed by the British Army originated in Great Britain. Supply lines, as much as possible, followed the lakes and rivers, thus rendering strategic importance to rivers such as the Niagara. The fight for control of the Niagara River was long and furious and highly creditable to the many American, native, British, and Canadian combatants.

British Forces

British Forces in North America

Britain had been engaged in war with revolutionary France nearly continuously since 1793. Britain's major contribution to the effort to suppress the revolution, and later Napoleon, was the Royal Navy, which maintained a blockade of European ports under French control. While the priority of resources went to the Royal Navy, the British government did not neglect its army. The role of the army was to defend the British Isles and the vast British Empire including the provinces of British North America.

In 1812, there was no country named Canada. That term was an imprecise geographic expression referring to all of British North America or to two provinces taken as a unity. British North America was reorganized in 1791 to consist of four provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Lower Canada, and Upper Canada. The majority of French-speaking colonists lived in Lower Canada and the term Quebec technically referred to only the city of that name. Upper Canada eventually was renamed the province of Ontario. "Upper" referred to the topographical situation that this province was up river (the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes) from the "lower" province. The governor general of British North America (the Crown's representative) resided in Quebec City, and he was assisted by lieutenant governors in each of the other three provinces.

When war was declared, Governor General Sir George Prevost had approximately 10,000 uniformed soldiers and 86,000 adult

males available for military service. These were divided into three components: regular army, fencibles, and militia.

Only a handful of regular infantry and artillery were posted to British North America and of these, only two infantry regiments were represented in Upper Canada. The 41st Regiment of Foot had been in the province since 1799 and the 49th Foot since 1802. Men enlisted for seven years or for life. Typical recruits came from two sources: the impoverished and the criminal class. Hard discipline turned this unlikely material into some of the finest infantry of its time. Over the years, Canadians enlisted into these regular formations but the bulk was born in England or Ireland. As the war progressed, the British government fed a trickle of reinforcements into Canada. However, with the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, the trickle became a torrent, and America came exceedingly close to losing the conflict.

The second component of British military force were the fencibles, also called provincials. The difference between the British regulars and the fencibles were two. First, the fencibles were raised from within the province. Second, they were not to be deployed outside of British North America. This last restriction was the key to success in recruiting. Canadian gentlemen were eager to serve as officers in units dedicated to the protection of the province. Likewise, enlisted men were happy to serve close to home without threat of being deployed to Spain or the unhealthy Caribbean colonies. The fencibles trained up to the standard of regulars and were in most ways indistinguishable from them on the battlefield. One fencible unit, the Glengarry Light Infantry, was prominent in the fighting along the Niagara River. This unit was raised early in 1812 as the specter of war with the United States loomed large. The Glengarries enlisted heavily from among the Scottish settlers of eastern Upper Canada along the shores of Lake Ontario. They were particularly adept at forest fighting and were frequently chosen for difficult missions.

The final component of British land power was the militia. There were approximately 11,000 men of military age in Upper Canada; however, not all were reliable. In the decade prior to the war, Upper Canada was opened to settlers from the United States.

The government demanded an oath of loyalty, but many of the newcomers took the oath lightly. They came for cheap land and had no particular attachment to King George. Major General Isaac Brock, acting lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, was well aware of the potential disaffection of these former-Americans and was careful to arm and train only those civilians who were trustworthy citizens of the Empire.

Upper Canada, like the United States, formed militia regiments on a geographical basis. Each county provided at least one regiment. Lincoln County encompassed the Niagara Peninsula, opposite the Niagara River from New York. Lincoln County provided the manpower for five militia regiments. The area around the city of York (present day Toronto) also provided militia who saw considerable combat along the Niagara. Early in 1812, Brock formed two levels of militia. Each regiment organized two flank companies composed of men under forty years of age. The flank companies trained six days a week and were at the highest priority for weapons and uniforms. Brock ensured that militia leaders assigned only loyal men to the flank companies. The militia also spawned a small number of volunteer companies and a few of these, such as the Niagara Light Dragoons and Captain Runchey's Coloured Company served admirably. In 1813, Upper Canada gathered several militia flank companies to form the Volunteer Incorporated Militia Battalion, a full-time battalion trained to the standard of regulars. This battalion was involved in some of the toughest fights of the war along the Niagara.

Organization

British infantry regiments could have from one to seven battalions. More than half of all regiments had but two battalions. Interestingly, the battalions of the regiment rarely served together in the same army. Thus, the terms regiment and battalion tend to be used interchangeably in contemporary records and in historical literature. The infantry battalion was commanded by a lieutenant colonel. If the regimental colonel was present, he would often be in command of a brigade or a garrison or perhaps be back in the British Isles recruiting or on inactive duty.

Each British battalion consisted of ten companies, like American infantry regiments. However, there was an important distinction. British battalions had eight "battalion" or "centre" companies and two elite "flank" companies. These distinctions arose from the position of the companies when arrayed in a line formation, each company side-by-side facing the enemy. One of the flank companies was designated the grenadier company. The largest, most stalwart soldiers would eventually find their way into this company and receive a pay bonus. These grenadiers were equipped exactly like the soldiers of the centre companies; they had long ago given up the distinction of throwing hand bombs during an assault. The other flank company was designated as the light company and consisted of equally stalwart soldiers who were physically tough and particularly energetic. As one may imagine, the light company often received the task of scouting and skirmishing. Soldiers of this company also earned higher pay.

The reason the two companies were positioned on the flanks of the battalion was to make it easier to detach them without fracturing the integrity of the line. The battalion commander could readily detach the light company to form a skirmish line well ahead of the rest of the battalion. The same commander could detach the grenadier company to defend a weak flank or to lead the assault of a key objective. Brigade and division commanders often joined several light companies together temporarily and did the same for grenadier companies in order to take best advantage of the morale and fortitude of these elite units. During the war, with so much border to defend, the infantry battalions were further divided to provide broader coverage. Along the thirty-seven mile length of the Niagara River, for example, individual companies might be assigned to defend the several likely crossing points. Like the American infantry battalions, a British battalion seldom saw combat with all of its companies united under its lieutenant colonel.

The authorized strength of a British infantry battalion was 1,100 soldiers although this number was never attained. Strength reports in Canada showed the typical infantry battalion at 400 – 600 men, not all of whom would be present for duty. Fencible and militia battalions were organized similarly and as mentioned earlier, militia

flank companies very often served independently of the remaining companies of the battalion.

The British infantry had a proud heritage of specialized infantry. The branch boasted kilted highland regiments, green-jacketed riflemen, and whole battalions of light infantry and of fusiliers. While some of these distinct units fought in the war, none were active along the Niagara River.

The British infantry branch also included numerous "foreign corps," entire regiments recruited from non-British citizens. One of these, De Watteville's Swiss Regiment, served in the Niagara region. Formed in 1801 from volunteers from four shattered Swiss regiments, De Watteville's served in the Mediterranean until 1813 when it arrived in British North America. At that point, the officers of the battalion were still largely Swiss but some Germans and French émigrés had earned commissions. However, the enlisted soldiers represented most European nationalities: Swiss, Italians, Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Dutch, Russians, and Greeks. The battalion even recruited from among captured French soldiers. De Watteville's was uniformed and equipped identically to regular British infantry and was treated similarly as well.

Only one regular British cavalry regiment served in Canada —the 19th Light Dragoons. A British cavalry regiment was composed of a small headquarters and ten troops. The lieutenant colonel commanded the regiment, and he was assisted by two majors and a few non-commissioned officers and enlisted men. Captains commanded each troop, and this troop commander had the assistance of two lieutenants or cornets and a troop quartermaster, the senior non-commissioned officer. Corporals and privates rounded out the troop which stood at eighty dragoons at full strength. Cavalry tactics were designed for units called squadrons which were a grouping of two troops. Thus, a cavalry regiment consisted of five squadrons. The senior troop commander commanded the squadron. However, when a cavalry regiment deployed overseas, it left one or two squadrons back in Britain. These depot squadrons recruited troopers, acquired horses, and trained each for their new professions. As the regiment experienced losses, the depot squadrons pushed trained but inexperienced troopers and horses overseas to reinforce the parent unit.

The 19th Light Dragoons arrived in Quebec in May 1813. It consisted of three squadrons. One squadron, under the command of Captain Robert Lisle, moved immediately to Upper Canada and on to the Niagara Frontier. The 19th Light Dragoons were desperately needed as couriers and scouts and therefore the squadron hardly ever appeared in larger than troop strength. However, this squadron saw combat frequently and was awarded the battle honor Niagara for its achievements at the Battle of Lundy's Lane.

These regular cavalry were augmented by an Upper Canada volunteer unit, the Provincial Light Dragoons. This unit was organized as two troops. Captain William Hamilton Merritt commanded the troop that operated on the Niagara Peninsula and was better known as the Niagara Light Dragoons. The second troop operated in eastern Upper Canada and was commanded by Captain Richard Fraser.

British artillery serving on the Niagara Frontier came from the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Sometimes units from this regiment were called Royal Foot Artillery, which distinguished them from the Royal Horse Artillery or the Royal Marine Artillery, neither of which served along the Niagara. The Royal Foot Artillery consisted of ten battalions, each of ten companies. The battalions and companies were numbered although without discernible pattern. For example, the 58th Company (4th Battalion) and the 93rd Company (7th Battalion) both served on the Niagara Peninsula. The companies of a battalion did not serve together and, in fact, might be found on several continents.

While the companies were numbered, they were most frequently referred to by the name of their commander. Artillery officers were all graduates of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and were considered specialists, like engineer officers. In Canada, artillery companies were split up so that small detachments served guns in the field or at fixed fortifications. A "standard" artillery company served six cannon (a mixture of 9-pounders and 5.5 inch howitzers), but in Canada, gunners served whatever number and mix of guns available. Upper Canada raised the Incorporated Artillery Company made up of full time militia volunteers. Sometimes referred to as Militia Artillery or Provincial Artillery, the gunners of this unit were

a welcome addition to the artillery force. Unlike American artillerists who frequently served as infantry, the British artillerists never did so.

While the majority of officers in American units were new to their positions and had little but militia experience as preparation, officers in British units were largely professionals. British officers overwhelmingly came from the gentry and middle class although a small percentage came up from the ranks as a reward for gallantry. British officers were literate but not particularly well educated. Only about four percent were graduates of the Royal Military College at High Wycombe. While it was still possible to purchase a commission, most officers were promoted by seniority as spaces were opened by death or injury.

Native Forces

American Allies

Native forces allied to the Americans on the Niagara Frontier were almost entirely from the six tribes of the Iroquois nation. The Iroquois Confederacy had been largely splintered by the American Revolution. Various groups who had sided with the British in the Revolution left the ancestral lands of central New York and moved to Lower and Upper Canada. However, large numbers of Iroquois remained in New York. There was a large Seneca settlement along Buffalo Creek and a smaller Tuscarora village near Lewiston. Native culture, which all but prohibited males from agricultural pursuits, freed up a large portion of the male population for lengthy periods of warfare. There were over seven hundred native warriors associated with these two Iroquois settlements and many would eventually fight under their own war chiefs as allies of the Americans in 1813 and 1814.

Clearly, American military officials understood the value of native warriors who were unsurpassed in their specialty – the ambush. However, Secretary of War William Eustis was convinced that the best course of action, initially at least, would be to secure the neutrality of all the Iroquois. The Iroquois were treated diplomatically as a separate nation. Indian agents met with Seneca and Tusca-

rora chiefs to see where those tribes stood. The New York Iroquois saw no imperative for war. Seneca leaders sent a chief, Little Billy, to visit the Iroquois at the Grand River settlement in Upper Canada. The Grand River natives were willing to fight as allies of the British; therefore, a compromise was struck. The New York Iroquois would remain neutral while the Grand River Indians would ally themselves with the British. However, in no case would Iroquois fight Iroquois. Within a year of the declaration of war, this internal Iroquois agreement came apart and the New York Iroquois actively defended their side of the river from British raids. In the 1814 campaign, New York and Grand River Iroquois fought each other fiercely.

British Allies

The native warriors allied to the British and who fought along the Niagara came from three sources. First were the Iroquois who settled in Lower Canada and were referred to as the "Seven Nations of Canada." Largely from the Mohawk tribe and centered at the St. Regis reservation, many would fight at Beaver Dams in 1813. The second group was those western natives who were the residue of Tecumseh's Confederation after that body was all but destroyed at the Battle of the Thames in 1813. These refugee western natives moved eastward and were dependent upon the British for their survival. They made themselves available to the British for the 1814 campaign along the Niagara and fought ferociously at the Battle of Chippawa.

The third group and the ones who were most closely associated with the war along the Niagara were the Grand River Indians under their war chief, John Norton. John Norton's father was Cherokee and his mother was a Scot. Born and educated in Britain, Norton arrived in Upper Canada as a young man and eventually found his way to the Grand River settlement where he was the adopted nephew of Iroquois chief Joseph Brant. As a group, the Grand River Indians were conflicted in their support for the British. Norton encouraged active support for the British, and he led his eager followers throughout the war.

Weapons

Infantry

The primary weapons of American and British infantry were the musket and bayonet. The musket was a smooth bore weapon firing a spherical bullet. Tactics depended more on the volume of fire than on its accuracy. Therefore, in order to increase the rate of fire, the diameter of the ball was significantly less than that of the barrel. Thus, the infantryman could ram the charge and ball down the barrel quickly. As the musket was fired, the ball careened down the barrel and left the muzzle on an erratic trajectory. While a trained individual carefully aiming his musket might have a reasonable chance of hitting a man-sized target at forty yards, a group of soldiers armed with muskets could inflict significant casualties at 125 yards or farther. With enough training, a typical soldier could manage to fire two rounds in a minute. Very well-trained soldiers, such as British regulars, could often achieve a rate of three and even four volleys in that time under combat conditions.

Misfires were numerous. In approximately 15% of firings, the powder charge failed to ignite. Misfires were the result of misaligned or broken flints, a disturbed charge of priming powder, fouling in the touchhole, or just plain poor quality gunpowder. An experienced soldier could detect a misfire and correct the deficiency to restore his weapon to working order. An inexperienced soldier might continue to load his weapon with charge and ball. If the weapon misfired at each subsequent firing, the soldier was merely ineffective. However, if the weapon eventually fired, the barrel would explode, seriously injuring or killing the firer and nearby soldiers.

Firing the weapon produced particles of burning powder and small chips from the flint that flew in all directions. Uniform coats of the day had high collars and military headgear had low brims, both designed to protect hands and face from burns. Nonetheless, after the fight the regimental surgeons treated numerous facial and hand burns. The kick of a musket was similar to that of a 12 gauge shotgun and often left soldiers with sore shoulders. Failure to properly control the weapon upon firing would often injure both the firer and nearby comrades.

After each volley, the air was filled with dirty white smoke. If there was no wind to disperse the smoke, then the firer would lose sight of his target after as few as three volleys. For inexperienced soldiers, this could be a time of dreadful fear. Was the enemy even then approaching, unseen, bayonets lowered?

Muskets were fitted to hold socket bayonets; rifles were not. The bayonet was a terror weapon. Approximately fifteen inches long with a triangular cross section, a bayonet was extremely deadly if brought into close action. The fear of being wounded by a bayonet was so pervasive that inexperienced soldiers would often refuse to charge home despite the urgings of their officers. These same soldiers would often withdraw against orders in the face of a determined charge by the enemy. Experienced soldiers, understanding the moral advantage that a bayonet charge gave them, were sometimes eager to advance against an enemy believed to be less experienced and trained.

The British used a rugged, well-made musket officially called the Tower musket. This name derived from weapons testing conducted at the Tower of London. The troops called their .75 caliber weapon the Brown Bess, a name originating in the lack of shine of the metallic parts of the weapon. It is this name, Brown Bess, which continues in common parlance. The Brown Bess had the lowest misfire rate of any military musket of the era.

The Americans generally used three types of muskets during the war. First was the Brown Bess. The government bought 11,000 British muskets prior to 1812 and these found their way into several arsenals. Also, captured weapons were sent to state and federal arsenals and issued to militia as demand rose during the war. The second was the French Model 1763 "light." This was the "Charleville" musket that France sent to America by the tens of thousands during the American Revolution. The major French arms factory was at Charleville and most weapons were stamped with this label. After the Revolution, the federal government recovered as many of these .69 caliber Charlevilles as it could and stored them in arsenals for later use. Typically, the Charleville was issued to militia.

The most common American firearm was the US Model 1795. This .69 caliber weapon was a virtual copy of the French Model

1763 "light." The two American arsenals at Springfield and Harpers Ferry produced approximately 155,000 of these weapons between 1795 and 1815 when production ceased. Desperate to arm a sizable force of regulars, volunteers, and militia, the War Department let contracts for tens of thousands of these weapons to private arms manufacturers. The largest contract was completed by Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, at his plant in New Haven, Connecticut. During its twenty years in production, the Model 1795 underwent a variety of subtle modifications, leading arms historians to identify a number of different "models." However, from the standpoint of the firer, all were essentially the same weapon with nearly identical firing characteristics.[1]

Musket ammunition consisted of a ball and powder rolled up in a paper cartridge. The paper was sometimes pasted closed but more often tied with string. The Americans also used a variant which consisted of three small buck shot placed atop the ball. Buck and ball was so popular among American soldiers that virtually all cartridges were configured this way by war's end. The four pieces of lead dispersed soon after leaving the muzzle giving a somewhat greater probability of hitting a target. However, there is no clear evidence that the three buck shot were effective in incapacitating an enemy soldier unless striking the soldier in the face or hands. The British considered buck and ball as ungentlemanly.

American rifle units, both regulars and volunteers, were armed with either the Model 1803 or Contract Model 1807 Rifle. The Model 1803 was a .54 caliber weapon manufactured only at the Harpers Ferry arsenal. As the name implies, the Contract Model 1807 was made by private arms manufacturers. The two weapons differed only in that the Model 1803 was a half-stocked firearm while the other was full-stocked. American riflemen on the Niagara Frontier were represented by the First and Fourth Rifle Regiments, which were regular formations, as well as various volunteer companies raised in New York State. The British fighting on the Niagara Frontier had no rifle units although some militiamen may have carried rifles.

The rifle was very much a precision weapon, extremely accurate in the hands of a well-trained firer. The rifleman carried fine priming powder as well as coarser gunpowder rather than fixed cartridges like musket ammunition. The rifle ball had a much tighter

fit than the musket ball. The rifleman had to patch the ball with a greased piece of cloth or leather. This served to seal gases behind the ball and to assist the ball in gripping the barrel rifling. It took a skilled rifleman as long as a minute to carefully load his weapon but the time spent was an investment. The rifle was accurate up to three hundred yards.

Artillery

Artillery weapons made a major impact on land and sea battles in the War of 1812. The destructive power of large size projectiles passing through the oak of a ship's side or tearing into the flesh of soldiers was immense. Just the flash, sound, and smoke of a gun firing and the whoosh of the shot as it passed nearby was enough to strike fear into the hearts of veterans and to scatter new soldiers.

By 1812, artillery weapons were specialized depending upon the desired effect on the target. There were three general types of cannon: guns, howitzers, and mortars. All were smooth bore (lacking rifling that appeared later in the century) and loaded from the open end or muzzle. Guns had the longest barrels and shot at a flat trajectory, giving them longer range and greater accuracy than howitzers or mortars. Guns were the most typical battlefield pieces. Guns were differentiated by the weight of their projectile; a six-pounder gun would fire an iron ball of that weight. Six-pounder guns were most common on the battlefield although nine, eighteen, and twenty-four pounder guns appeared from time to time. The larger guns, requiring much heavier carriages to absorb recoil, more commonly remained in fortifications. Guns fired a variety of ammunition: shot, grape, and case (canister), were most common.

Shot (also called roundshot) was a solid iron ball that smashed through its target. Its use was against ships, fortifications, and compact units of men. When used against troops, the gunners aimed in front of the target. The ball would thus strike the ground and make a series of low bounces, passing through the target and inflicting more casualties. This technique only worked if the ground was hard. A six-pounder gun could fire shot up to a thousand yards. A six-pound iron ball was about three and a half inches in diameter and was plainly visible if it was coming directly at its target. Although

it was “unmanly” to dodge an approaching shot, not many soldiers could hold themselves to that standard.

Figure 3. 1st United States Rifle Regiment 1812 by Don Troiani.
Source: Courtesy of Historical Art Prints,

Grape ammunition was designed to be used against people. The projectile was composed of a number of iron or lead balls (each an inch or more in diameter) and held together in a canvas bag, tied tightly in a compact cylindrical shape necessary for easy loading. This configuration resembled a bunch of grapes and thus the name.

As the round was fired, the bag ruptured and the iron balls flew down range in a conical pattern. This "shot gun" blast cut a much wider swath through enemy lines than a solid iron ball. Because the balls making up the grape ammunition were so heavy, the range was nearly as great (about 75%) as that of solid shot.

Case, or canister, ammunition was named after its configuration. The round of ammunition consisted of a thin metal cylindrical can filled with lead musket balls. The shock of the gun being fired was enough to collapse the metal can and the musket balls left the muzzle of the gun in a wide pattern. While having less than half the range of solid shot, case was utterly devastating against formed units of men. A line of soldiers could not stand long before even a single gun firing case ammunition. The soldiers would have to charge forward, or withdraw out of range.

Besides guns, an artillery unit might have with it a howitzer. The barrel of a howitzer was shorter than that of a gun. The purpose of a howitzer was to fire at a higher trajectory than a gun and thus to lob its projectile over the walls of a fortification and to explode over the heads of enemy troops. While a howitzer could fire shot, case, and grape, its specific design was to fire shell. Shell was a hollow iron ball filled with gunpowder. The shell was fitted with a fuse that ignited when the explosive charge pushed the shell out of the barrel. The gunner cut the fuse to an appropriate length so that the shell exploded over the target, raining a blast of hot metal fragments downward and into the target. If the fuse was too long, or burned too slowly, the shot would bury itself into the ground and its effects were diminished. Nonetheless, the sight of a shell on the ground, fuse sputtering, was terrifying to onlookers awaiting the blast.

Prior to the war, British Lieutenant Colonel Henry Shrapnel of the Royal Artillery designed a round of ammunition that was eventually to bear his name. Shrapnel built a thin metal shell which he filled with gunpowder and a few dozen musket balls. When this shell, called spherical case, exploded in the air over soldiers, the destruction was immense. The Americans were taken by surprise when spherical case was used early in the war. However, by the end of the war, the Americans were able to build their own version of spherical case.

The last category of cannon was the mortar. Mortars had very short barrels and fired in high arcs. Artillerists used mortars to lob shells into large fortifications. Naval forces sometimes used gun boats armed with mortars against large seacoast fortifications. Because a mortar's recoil was downward, it was impractical to design a carriage that would be light enough for field use. Thus, there was little call for mortars on the battlefield.

There were guns of all kinds in the permanent fortifications along the Niagara River. These guns were very often mounted on "garrison" or "truck" carriages, the wooden gun carriages found on naval vessels. The gun and carriage were placed on a gun platform, a level expanse of timber or stone which more easily allowed movement to align the gun with its target. However, garrison carriages were entirely useless in the field. The roads and ground could not support the ground pressure of small iron wheels. Field carriages, with large wheels (essentially wagon wheels) allowed guns to be moved along dry roads and on gentle slopes. The design of British and American field carriages differed. The Americans stuck with an adaptation of the French Gribeauval carriage whose distinguishing factor was a double trail to absorb recoil. British field carriages had a single trail which was a bit lighter and easier to manhandle into position. However, both armies generally took few guns to the field with them, largely because of the exceptionally poor trafficability along the Niagara River. In many cases, the speed of the army on the march was limited by the artillery.

Both sides fortified possible crossing sites along the river with guns placed behind earthen bastions called batteries. In this period, a battery referred to one or more guns placed together rather than a company-sized unit of artillery. The most famous of these batteries was called the "Salt Battery" about a mile south of Fort Niagara on the New York side of the river. The Americans used large barrels of salt to form the hard core of the wall of the battery. They completed the battery by heaping soil on the barrels and constructing a timber gun platform within it.

Dragoons

Small numbers of mounted soldiers, both regulars and volunteers, served on the Niagara Frontier. British and Canadian dra-

goons armed themselves with sabers, pistols, and carbines. Their American counterparts carried pistols and sabers, but not carbines. From time to time, American volunteer mounted rifle companies appeared. These irregular formations carried rifles, and a diverse array of tomahawks, pistols, hunting knives, and sabers.

Figure 4. Gun on a reproduction Garrison Carriage at Fort George, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

Source: Courtesy of Fort George National Historic Site, Ontario, Canada. Photo by Ann K. Barbuto.

Sabers and Swords

In both the American and British armies, swords were issued to officers, sergeants, musicians, artillerists, and dragoons. There were three types of cutting edge weapons in general use. The first was the straight sword, most often issued to infantry and enlisted artillery soldiers. The second was called the "cut and thrust" sword. This weapon had a slight curve and was often used by infantry and other officers who probably acquired them privately. The last was the saber, a weapon with a curved blade, issued to all dragoons and light (horse) artillery. In both the American and British forces, officers often procured their own swords and sabers and ignored uniform regulations. While dragoons used sabers as their primary weapon,

officers carried cutting edge weapons as a symbol of their rank and as a useful tool in pointing out targets or direction.

Figure 5. Battle of the Thames (War of 1812) October 5, 1813.

Source: Painting by Don Troiani, Courtesy of Historical Art Prints.

In both armies, and particularly among American militia forces, swords and sabers came in a bewildering array of designs. While blades were universally of steel, hilts could be of steel or brass. Metal parts might be gilded or silvered and grips could be of wood, leather, brass, or ivory. Scabbards were seen in both steel and leather, often banded and reinforced in brass or steel. There was a short fabric lanyard, called a sword knot, attached to the hilt of the sword or saber. Traditionally horse soldiers looped the sword knot around their wrist so that they could maintain possession of the sword and still have free use of the hand. While still used this way by horse soldiers, foot soldiers displayed the sword knot more as a decoration than as a functional item. In the American army, officers had sword knots laced with silver while enlisted soldiers had white sword knots. In the British army, the color of the sword knot often reflected regimental affiliation.

British sergeants carried seven-foot long pikes, sometimes called espontoons. This weapon was essentially a spear with a hilt or cross-piece at the base of the metal spear point. The sergeant used this weapon to help align the ranks. Since sergeants stood at the rear of the firing line, the unstated threat was that a sergeant could more readily prod a soldier who showed signs of withdrawing from the fight without orders. Color sergeants, non-commissioned officers who stood on either side of the officers who carried the regimental standards, used the pikes to defend the flags.

Tactics

American and British

The goal of a field battle was to break the will of the enemy, force its withdrawal, and pursue it to destruction. For a variety of reasons, this goal was rarely achieved. Nonetheless, British and American commanders formed firing lines of infantry supported by a handful of guns and attempted to achieve decisive victory.

The American army started the war using Baron Von Steuben's "Blue Book" as a source for its tactical doctrine.[2] Von Steuben, developing his concepts at Valley Forge, derived his tactical manual from contemporary European practices. He simplified the many movements because the American soldier, unlike his European counterparts, would not have years to train. The regular army retained the Blue Book after the war and Congress stipulated its general use for the militia as well. However, the French Revolution sparked a review of tactical doctrine. The French developed a new, flexible tactical doctrine, the 1791 *Reglement,* which used combinations of columns and lines to accommodate both the trained regular and the poorly trained conscript. This publication, and the successes of the French army, prompted the US War Department to look for a successor to Von Steuben's Blue Book. Two contenders appeared.

William Duane, a staunch Jeffersonian and Philadelphia newspaper publisher, borrowed heavily from the new French doctrine and to a lesser extent from Von Steuben to develop a series of small manuals covering tactical doctrine for infantry and riflemen. However, in early 1812 Secretary of War William Eustis ordered that the

infantry adopt a tactical manual written by Alexander Smyth. Interestingly, Smyth commanded the Rifle Regiment and Duane served as his lieutenant colonel from 1808 to 1810. Smyth's *Regulations for the Field Exercises, Manoeuvres and Conduct of the Infantry* governed regular infantry only. The militia continued to be guided by the Blue Book.

Smyth's *Regulations* were an abridgement of French tactical doctrine for movements on the battlefield. However, administrative material, such as how to set up a camp or conduct guard, were derived from Von Steuben. The American army, rapidly expanded in 1812, needed all the help it could get. Hundreds of new officers acquired Smyth's *Regulations* and attempted to learn them and put them into practice in their companies and regiments. The first year of the war was a disaster for the Americans. Alexander Smyth, then a brigadier general, humiliated himself and the army by his comedic and abortive invasion of Upper Canada in November. Congress dropped Smyth from the army. President Madison replaced William Eustis as secretary of war with John Armstrong. Armstrong almost immediately replaced Smyth's *Regulations* with William Duane's *A Handbook for Infantry*.

Very quickly, senior officers criticized Duane's *Handbook*. It was incomplete and unclear. Commanders in the field used whatever suited them: Von Steuben, Duane, Smyth, or some locally concocted combination. It was entirely possible that each of several regiments brigaded together might have been trained using different doctrinal sources. This tactical confusion in the US Army lasted for the duration of the war. The British army, on the other hand, was governed since 1792 by a standard manual written by Colonel David Dundas. Dundas's book, known commonly as "Dundas's 18 Manoeuvres" was conservative; Dundas preferred the line over the attack column. British infantry were expert at the many tactical movements and were clearly an overmatch for comparable numbers of American infantry, at least at the beginning of the war.

A notional battle would start with the two belligerents facing each other in line of battle. The combatant who arrived first would seek a position on higher ground with flanks protected by river or dense forest or a body of skirmishers. The combatant arriving on the battlefield later would typically have been moving on a road in

column and therefore have to break out into line formation, preferably out of musket and artillery range of the enemy. The Americans formed their infantry firing line in three ranks while the British preferred the two-rank line. If either side had artillery, the guns might be placed on the flanks in order to enfilade the approaching enemy thus inflicting more casualties than firing perpendicularly at the thin firing line.

Once the two sides were aligned, one side would approach the other. The attacking force was hoping to achieve a level of moral superiority over the defender. Artillery would open fire in order to drain the courage of the enemy. At some point, perhaps at one hundred yards distance, the two lines would open fire. The purpose of the fire fight was to break the resolve of the enemy to stand and fight. As each firer saw casualties on his left and right, he was faced with the decision to remain in combat and further risk his life or to withdraw without orders. The weight of fire, a result of the speed of firing volleys, was a major factor in eroding the resolve of the enemy but perhaps more importantly, the courage of a single soldier or a regiment was established before the battle.

The British soldier, a long-serving professional, was highly trained and perhaps the veteran of other fights in other lands. At the beginning of the war, the Americans and particularly the militia understood that man for man they were no match for these red-coated professionals. This attitude would change during the war as American formations gathered experience and skill. However, in the first year of the war, American commanders knew that they needed a heavy advantage in numbers if they were to have a chance at victory.

As the battle progressed, with sides trading volleys, the force that could fire more frequently gained an advantage in morale. After a few volleys, the battlefield was immersed in dense smoke. For a soldier already questioning his own courage, the inability to see the enemy across the battlefield was particularly frightening. British commanders perceived that American forces were particularly brittle, that they would fracture with a strong blow. Thus even when outnumbered, the British would often deliver a bayonet assault. British commanders attempted to keep their men quiet during this assault. While soldiers might yell to steel their own courage and intimidate the enemy, this kept them from hearing the orders of their officers.

The two lines hardly ever made contact. As one side assaulted, two outcomes were most common. Either the men delivering the assault would lose their enthusiasm and stop before making contact, or the defending line would break.

When a line broke, panic frequently ensued. The men, seeing their comrades flee, dropped their weapons in order to lighten their load and ran for safety. Officers and non-commissioned officers would try desperately to rally as many troops as possible in the hopes of preserving some order. The successful attackers would try to gain some trophies such as the enemy's flags or artillery pieces. These tangible tokens of victory made a powerful statement in establishing the degree of the victory. Cavalry was in such short supply along the Niagara that neither side had enough to launch a forceful mounted pursuit. If the victorious commander kept his head, he ordered fresh troops to pursue the enemy, capturing as many enemy soldiers, guns, horses, and wagons as possible. An inexperienced commander settled for the victory on the field and set his troops about their next duties, policing the battlefield.

After a sizeable battle, a day or longer was required to consolidate the victory. Burial parties gathered the dead, sorting them by nationality, and interred them deeply enough to discourage animals from digging them up. The officers of the parties recovered personal items from their fellow officers – watches, money, letters, swords etc. – to be sent to the next of kin. Enlisted dead would often yield their valuables to the men of the burial party. Other groups found the wounded and evacuated them to collection points. There, regimental surgeons worked quickly to treat the wounds they could. In any event, the wounded were loaded into wagons and evacuated to field hospitals. Work parties collected weapons, ammunition, and equipment to be re-issued as needed.

Native

The Iroquois concept of warfare was so foreign to European patterns of fighting that it provoked the scorn of many white officers and men. Sergeant Commins of the 8th Regiment of Foot saw quite a bit of active campaigning, often alongside Indian allies. After the war he wrote: "So far from being those brave warriors and have

such a contempt of death as you may have heard before, I conceive them to be the most cowardly despicable characters I ever saw (except scalloping a defenceless man or plundering the wretched inhabitants be an act of bravery) their cruelty exceeds everything I have ever seen among enemies…." Clearly Indian concepts of bravery and cruelty were measured against a different yardstick than those of European regulars.[3]

Because the native economy was organized and conducted at a near subsistence level, the death of a warrior was a calamity for his extended family, and the losses of large numbers of adult males could prove disastrous for the tribe or community. Therefore, while the warrior fought to prove his courage, he saw no point in dying. He might give evidence of his bravery in a single encounter and therefore was not compelled to continue through the duration of a long campaign. Thus the native warrior, faithful to the logic of his own world, appeared both fierce and ill-disciplined to his European or American ally.

While death was considered a tragedy, those natives who were chosen or aspired to be war chiefs were motivated toward conspicuous bravery, verging on recklessness. The traditional Indian scalplock was a taunt to their foes, a dare to them to try and take it. Also imbedded in Iroquois values was the imperative to avenge a death, which could lead to an ever-increasing cycle of murder and subsequent revenge-killings. A band of natives might join a white expedition motivated by the requirement to seek revenge for a prior killing. Once vengeance had been exacted, the party would return to their village, much to the dismay of their white commander who adhered to European concepts of warfighting and wanted to continue the operation beyond the opening battle.

Despite decades of contact with Europeans and Americans, and certainly in some awe at the technological aspects of western warfare, the Iroquois saw no point in adopting wholesale a western style of fighting. At the council held in Buffalo in September 1812, Little Billy addressed the Indian agents:

> [we] must act under our own chiefs; according to our own customs; be at liberty to take our own course of fighting, we cannot conform to your discipline in camp. So far as we can we will

> conform to your customs. When you see a boat with a white flag, you do not fire; we shall do the same…. We do not wish you to place us in forts where we cannot act.[4]

By 1812, the natives had adopted western firearms and adhered to some few of the conventions of "civilized" warfare. Europeans and their North American descendants likewise learned from the native, subsuming many techniques of woodland fighting into what was still recognizable as a European style of warfare. Those whites most closely associated with the native tended, unlike Sergeant Commins, to assume native attitudes as well as behavior. It has been noted that British Indian agents "were no more shocked by the burning of a prisoner than a regular army officer was shocked by the flogging to death of a soldier for a military offense."[5]

Perhaps the most effective Indian weapon was the ability to incite terror with nothing more than war whoops delivered unseen from the surrounding forests. American soldiers and militia in particular were susceptible to psychological terror and the cries of the natives drained them of the will to fight. The fear of being scalped was palpable. More than once, Indian whooping prompted Americans to withdraw from the firing line and even to surrender to much smaller numbers.

The amalgamation of native war parties into western military forces, even temporarily, was fraught with risks. While there was no denying the contribution of the Indians to victory on the battlefield, excesses committed after the battle excited the passions of the American public and the army to punish both the Indians and their British "masters." This could lead to a cycle of retributions which increased the hardships of natives, soldiers, and civilians alike.

Naval Forces

The War of 1812 was fought on both land and sea. The American public was thrilled, and the British dismayed, by a series of American ship-on-ship victories on the high seas early in the war. However, the immense Royal Navy eventually sank or drove into port all of America's ocean-going vessels. The British slowly but inexorably blockaded American ports and all but shut down the commercially important coastal traffic. Fortunately for the Ameri-

cans, the goal of capturing Canada depended little on control of the Atlantic and everything on command of the inland waterways, particularly Lakes Ontario, Erie, and Champlain. The British goal, to keep the Americans out of Canada, depended upon control of the St. Lawrence River and at least parity on Lake Ontario. Geography, particularly these inland waterways, defined the lines of communications into the theater of war.

Canada had few resources to defend itself. Virtually everything British forces needed—weapons, equipment, ammunition - came from across the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence River into Lake Ontario. For much of its length, the St. Lawrence was also the political border between the belligerents. Thus, the British were simultaneously defending their border as well as their main line of communication. Because of their location on that river, the cities of Quebec and Montreal were key to British survival in North America. For the Americans, the tools of war used against Canada originated in New York City. From there, boats took weapons and equipment up the Hudson River. Cargo for the army on Lake Champlain continued up the Hudson and was painstakingly portaged to Lake Champlain. Cargo intended for the war effort on Lake Ontario followed a series of water routes and portages across land to the port of Oswego. From Oswego, crews transloaded cargo to lake vessels and moved it north to Sackett's Harbor or west to the Niagara Frontier. Therefore, naval power could threaten the enemy's line of communication or preserve one's own.

Both sides started the war woefully unprepared on these waters. Both the British and Americans quickly bought, captured, or commandeered a number of civilian schooners and armed them with guns to give them some naval presence while they built fighting ships necessary to prosecute the war. The Americans and British were locked in an arms race on both Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The only clear decision came on Lake Erie. The Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813 led directly to the destruction of British power and that of the western natives under Tecumseh in western Upper Canada. However, the Americans could not manage to exploit this victory further east into the Niagara region. On Lake Ontario, naval events had a profound impact on land operations. The major American naval base was located at Sackett's Harbor, approximately 150

miles straight line distance from Fort Niagara. The British naval base on Lake Ontario was at Kingston, only thirty-six miles across the water from Sackett's Harbor.

The Secretary of the Navy sent Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Sackett's Harbor in October 1812 with orders to build a fleet and wrest control from the Royal Navy. The Navy Department also forwarded sailors, marines, ships' carpenters, guns, sails, cordage, and the myriad of other items required for a modern sailing vessel. The only item readily available on location was timber. Chauncey was an able administrator and ordered increasing numbers of men and resources to his base.

The Admiralty dispatched Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo to take command of all vessels on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain. Yeo arrived in Kingston in May 1813. His first act was a raid on Sackett's Harbor on 29 May which almost succeeded in capturing the American base. From that point until the end of the war, Chauncey and Yeo conducted the "shipbuilders' war," a desperate arms race to build and deploy a larger squadron than the enemy. As either side launched a new vessel, it gained a temporary advantage of "throw weight" and therefore put to sea. A curious dynamic, however, kept the two growing squadrons from ever fighting a decisive battle.

There were two types of naval artillery used on warships of the day. The long gun fired a considerable distance; its solid shot weighed perhaps 18 or 24 pounds. The carronade, with its massive muzzle yet short length, fired a much heavier shot, up to 48 pounds, but to a much shorter distance. Carronades were specifically designed to land hammer blows at short range while the long guns caused less damage but at longer ranges. The British vessels had a higher ratio of carronades to long guns than the Americans. Thus, the Americans, with more long guns, could potentially cause more damage to British vessels until the British could bring their ships into closer range where their carronades could overpower the American ships. Yeo was unwilling to engage the Americans at long range unless he had favorable winds to close the distance quickly. He often refused battle because weather conditions were disadvantageous. Likewise, Chauncey would not engage the British squadron without

a favorable wind. Also, Yeo understood full well that he could lose the war in an afternoon if he lost a single decisive battle. He was not anxious, under these conditions, to either seek or accept a fight with Chauncey. Chauncey was exceptionally reluctant to aid the army on the western end of Lake Ontario because that would have left his base open to another raid like the nearly successful attack in May 1813. Thus, the two commodores oversaw the construction of large vessels and great squadrons at their respective bases and yet never engaged in serious battle.

The previously described military forces fought numerous engagements and battles on land and water between June 1812 and January 1815. One area of operations more than any other, the Niagara region, saw near continuous fighting as the Americans were determined to advance their war efforts here. Chapter two describes the people and geography on both sides of the border described by the Niagara River.

Notes

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2. Donald E. Graves, "'Dry Books of Tactics': U.S. Infantry Manuals of the War of 1812 and After, Part 1," *Military Collector and Historian* 38 (Summer 1986): 50-61.

3. Norman C. Lord, ed., "The War on the Canadian Frontier, 1812-14: Letters written by Sergeant James Commins, 8th Foot," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 18 (1939):200.

4. Carl Benn, "Iroquois Warfare, 1812-1814." From R. Arthur Bowler, ed., *War Along the Niagara: Essays on the War of 1812 and its Legacy* (Youngstown, New York: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1991), 61.

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Chapter 2

The Niagara Region

Introduction

The American goals in the War of 1812 were threefold. The first goal was to get the British to stop seizing American vessels and cargoes. The second was to compel the British to cease the impressments of American sailors and to return those serving involuntarily on British warships. The third goal was to induce the British to curtail supplying the native population inside the borders of the United States with firearms and ammunition. President Madison and the congressional War Hawks, about a dozen young and ardent nationalists, fully understood that in normal times Britain was far too powerful to challenge. A war would be disastrous for the new American state. However, Britain was fully committed to a war with Revolutionary France and her powerful leader, Napoleon. If America were to have a chance at affirming what it considered its sovereign rights, then it had to strike when Britain was most vulnerable. Despite the high quality of the American navy, the number of vessels was woefully inadequate to challenge the Royal Navy. Thus, President Madison and the War Hawks devised a strategy to seize the provinces of British North America and trade them back to Britain during negotiations. If Britain refused to negotiate a trade, well, then America would retain Canada.

The problem with invading and seizing Canada was the topography. The Great Lakes stood as an imposing international boundary. Water transport on the lakes was all but impossible during the four months between December and March. Winter storms were notoriously fierce and ice covered the harbors and extended deep into the lake. Connecting the lakes were the St. Lawrence, Niagara, and Detroit Rivers, serious obstacles in their own right. The land along the lakes and rivers was almost entirely undeveloped. Settlements were scattered and roads few in number and inadequate to support wagon traffic. Unless the US Navy controlled the lakes, invasion was limited to the narrow corridors across the rivers. The importance of the Niagara River, then, was that it was one of the few places in which

a large land force could enter Canada. Americans have chosen to remember the War of 1812 largely through three events: the burning of Washington, the inspiration for the national anthem at the defense of Fort McHenry, and the Battle of New Orleans. However, no region saw more of the conflict, suffered more of the hardship, than that fertile land on both sides of the Niagara River.

Topography

The Niagara Region consists of two parts: the Niagara Peninsula in Upper Canada, and the Niagara Frontier in New York State. The Niagara Peninsula is described by Lake Ontario in the north, Lake Erie in the south, and the Niagara River on the east. The British organized this region as Lincoln County. The Niagara Frontier is that part of New York bordered on the west by the river. In 1812, this was organized politically as Niagara County. After the war, the state government subdivided the land into two counties, Erie in the south, Niagara in the north.

The Niagara River is the international border between the Niagara Peninsula and the Niagara Frontier. The Niagara is technically a strait, not a river, as it connects two larger bodies of water. The Niagara drains Lake Erie into Lake Ontario. The current is typically three miles per hour which allows sailing vessels and oar-powered boats to cross along much of its course.

From the eastern end of Lake Erie, the Niagara flows northward and its thirty-seven mile course would be entirely unremarkable except for the stunning falls. During the last ice age, glaciers formed an eighty-mile long escarpment running east and west across the Niagara Region. The locals of the nineteenth century called the escarpment 'the mountain.' The steep-sided, flat-topped mountain was roughly 180 feet above the plain below. Over the millennia, the river cut a gorge back from the precipice. The effects of the river and the escarpment define trafficability along the Niagara.

The mouth of the Niagara River at Lake Erie is about two miles wide. Fort Erie in Upper Canada and the village of Buffalo in New York are opposite one another at this point. Entering Lake Erie at the mouth of the Niagara on the American side is Buffalo Creek (now called the Buffalo River). The Niagara River quickly narrows to a width of 650 yards. Starting at the mouth, the river bank is very low

rendering access to the water easy to both man-powered and sail-powered vessels. About two miles north of Buffalo was the village of Black Rock (now incorporated into the city of Buffalo). Here, the Black Rock Ferry allowed regular commerce across the river.

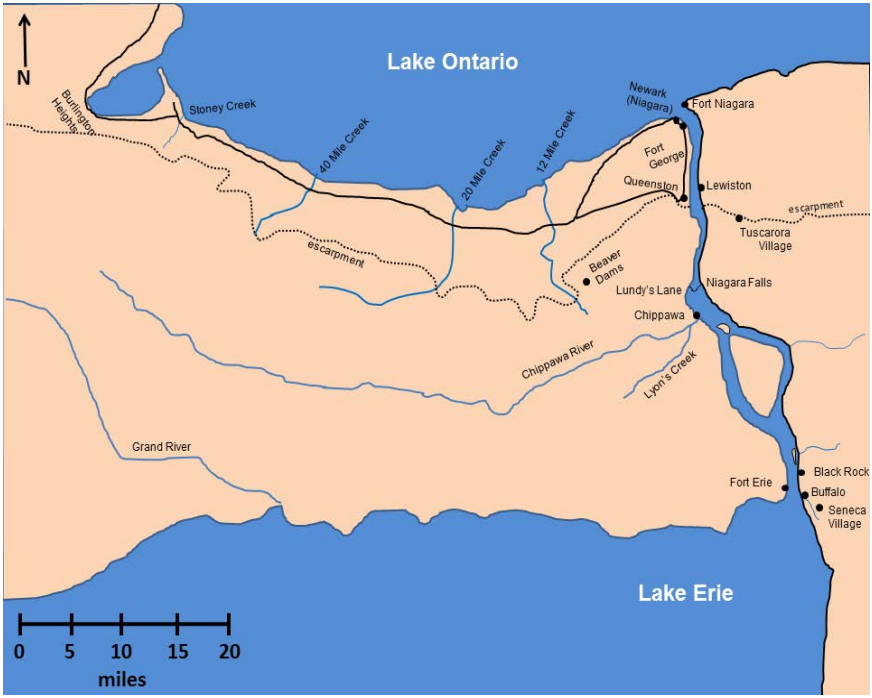

Figure 6. The Niagara Region.

The first topographic feature on the river is Squaw Island, a long, narrow, flat island approximately one and a half miles long. The importance of Squaw Island is the narrow channel between it and the New York side of the river. Here lake vessels could shelter from the current. Since Squaw Island was covered in trees, the view of the channel (now called the Black Rock Canal) was blocked from the Canadian shore. Conjocta Creek (now Scajaquada Creek) enters the canal near the mid point of Squaw Island. This was the scene of a decisive engagement in August 1814.

About five miles north of its start, the Niagara River bifurcates, only to unite seven miles downstream. The resulting land mass is called Grand Island. Grand Island is flat and was well-wooded in 1812, as was most of the Niagara Region. The Seneca Tribe of the Iroquois Nation took a proprietary interest in Grand Island, a claim

recognized by the American federal and New York State governments. Where the river joins again north of Grand Island is the much smaller Navy Island. This land feature is one mile long and a half mile wide and was flat and wooded.

From Navy Island, the Niagara turns west and runs about three miles as it approaches the majestic Niagara Falls. Along this short stretch, the Chippawa River (now the Welland River) enters the Niagara from the Canadian side. (The Americans called the river, and the settlement at its mouth, Chippewa. This study will use the common British nomenclature throughout.) The Chippawa River is 70 yards wide near the Niagara River. Lyons Creek enters the Chippawa from the south approximately one mile from the Niagara. This small area was the scene of grim fighting in 1814.

From the confluence of the Niagara and Chippawa Rivers, the Niagara turns north, and narrows into fierce rapids leading to the precipice of Niagara Falls. Lundy's Lane intersects the river road near the falls. The Niagara River was navigable from Lake Erie to the mouth of the Chippawa. Several small creeks entered the river from both sides along this stretch. Wooden bridges allowed road traffic to cross these creeks at their mouths and most were fordable for men and horses further inland. At Niagara Falls begins the five-mile long gorge. The river here averages 170 yards in width. The Niagara Gorge is steep-sided and utterly uncrossable. It ends at the edge of the escarpment.

As the river exits the gorge, it quickly widens to about 500 yards in width. Interestingly, the current becomes quite unruly as it passes the villages of Lewiston, New York and Queenston, Upper Canada. The main current in the center of the river continues northward to Lake Ontario. However, there are powerful back currents nearer to both shores flowing southward. The flow is replete with eddies and cross currents making boat traffic exceedingly difficult for all except experienced pilots.

From the escarpment, the Niagara River flows due north for another seven miles until it empties into Lake Ontario. The banks of the river vary from 20 to 30 feet high and are fairly steep. The villages of Queenston and Lewiston were located at cuts in the bank allowing easier boat traffic between the two towns.

Much of the 1813 campaign was conducted along the northern part of the Niagara Peninsula, between the escarpment and Lake Ontario. The corridor formed by the escarpment and the shore varies between three and six miles in width. The shore between the Niagara River in the east and Burlington Bay in the west is fifty miles long and is cut by numerous creeks, named by their distance from the Niagara River. Overlooking Burlington Bay is a long, narrow ridge, approximately 100 feet tall, named Burlington Heights. Burlington Bay was all but closed by a narrow spit of land yet the bay was a refuge for British vessels avoiding the prowling American navy.

New York Settlement and Fortifications

The Niagara Frontier was settled by whites later than the land on the Canadian side of the river. The land was a forested wilderness when Americans first moved in to live after the British evacuated in 1796. A group of Dutch bankers invested in the Holland Land Company and purchased a huge tract of land on the Niagara Frontier. Their agents sold parcels of land to hardy men and women anxious to start a life on soil of their own. The new settlers quickly threw up log cabins and cleared fields for planting. Life was exceptionally difficult in the early years and the newcomers could hardly feed themselves. Eventually, skilled persons established sawmills, gristmills, and blacksmith shops. The white settlers maintained good relations with the nearby Seneca. By 1812, many had moved from subsistence living and were producing enough grain and livestock to sell or trade.

Buffalo

Joseph Ellicott, the primary agent of the Holland Land Company, laid out the village of Buffalo and began selling lots in 1803. The village was situated north of Buffalo Creek and on firm ground above the muddy flats along the Niagara River. By 1812, about four hundred settlers resided in the village and had erected approximately one hundred log or wood frame cabins. The houses were interspersed among small enclosed pastures, gardens and orchards.

Black Rock

The village of Black Rock was located about two miles north of Buffalo and was somewhat smaller. Black Rock was a commercial rival of Buffalo. It was site of a ferry and a small boat wharf. As war became increasingly probable, the local militia from Buffalo, Black Rock, and surrounding farms, built a number of earthwork batteries along the lake and river fronts to challenge any crossing from Canada.

Seneca Village on Buffalo Creek

After the Revolution, the federal government forced the migration of the Iroquois west from their ancestral lands to a small number of reservations. The largest reservation, comprising about one hundred thirty square miles, was allocated to the Seneca and was located along Buffalo Creek. During the war, this reservation was referred to as the Seneca Village on Buffalo Creek. The Indian agents established saw mills and a blacksmith operation to serve the natives. This settlement could provide about six hundred males of military age and did so in 1814 to fight as allies of the Americans. It was common to see Seneca in the village of Buffalo to trade or just visit.

Tuscarora Village

The Tuscarora were the sixth tribe of the Iroquois nation. They maintained a small settlement atop the escarpment a few miles away from Lewiston. Indian agents provided the Tuscarora with a saw mill and the natives were starting to cultivate the land and maintain livestock. A sizable number of Seneca and Tuscarora men were reluctant to embrace agriculture and would have much preferred to return to hunting and warfare. To them, farming continued to be work unfit for males. Christian missionaries made inroads into the old culture, however, and the result was a splitting of the natives into two groups, traditionalists and those willing to embrace at least some white modes of living. Native leaders had succeeded to a large degree in persuading the natives to avoid excessive use of alcohol and to channel energy into new pursuits. While neutral in 1812, the following year saw New York Iroquois taking an active role in de-

fending their land from British raids. By the last year of the war, these Iroquois on the Niagara Frontier invaded Canada and fought the Canadian Iroquois at Chippawa.

Lewiston

Lewiston was located at the base of the escarpment and across the river from Queenston. The parcel of land that became Lewiston was originally a French trading post that was situated at the end of an Indian trail leading across what is now western New York. After the French and Indian War, the British established a ferry to connect the trading post with Queenston. In 1796, the British yielded control of the land to the Americans. The Holland Land Company surveyed a small village and opened up lots for sale in 1805. They named the settlement Lewis Town after then New York Governor Morgan Lewis. The settlers quickly referred to their home as Lewiston. Approximately twenty families resided at Lewiston at the beginning of the war.

Fort Niagara

Fort Niagara played a pivotal role in the development of European colonial power over the interior of North America. The Niagara River was part of the extensive waterway that connected French holdings from the great city of Quebec, through the Great Lakes and the Ohio Country, and down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Fort Niagara guarded the northern mouth of the Niagara River. The famous French explorer, La Salle, ordered the first fortification on the site in 1678. Fire destroyed this initial fort, but nine years later, the French constructed another wooden palisade fort. The Seneca tribe granted France the right to build a large stone warehouse on the site in 1725. The resulting "Castle" was the center of fur trading in the region for decades.

The British and French contended for mastery of the fur trade and indeed of the continent itself. In 1755 the French garrison closed off the land approach to the Castle with Vauban style fortifications. They threw up two bastions, one above the Niagara and the other above Lake Ontario. They connected these bastions with an earthen curtain or wall. Finally, they protected the front of the curtain with a triangular-shaped ravelin. In 1759, a British force of regulars, co-

lonials, and Iroquois warriors laid siege to Fort Niagara. After nineteen days of intense fighting, the French garrison surrendered.

Figure 7. Aerial View of Old Fort Niagara, ca. 1990s looking North-westerly.

Source: Courtesy of the Old Fort Niagara Association, Fort Niagara National State Park, Youngstown, New York.

The British eventually constructed two stone redoubts, one in each of the bastions. These square, two-storied redoubts were impressive. The walls were five feet thick at the base. The designer added a parapet above the second story and built it to support heavy guns.

During the American Revolution, Fort Niagara served as a major base for British soldiers and native allies to raid American settlements in New York and Pennsylvania. After the war, Fort Niagara was on land ceded to the new United States but the fort did not change hands until 1796. With the eastern shore of the Niagara River under American control, British authorities built Forts George and Erie at the northern and southern ends of the river respectively to guard the fragile supply lines to British settlements and forts on the northern shores of the Great Lakes.

John Young opened a store just south of the fort in 1809. Short-

ly thereafter, several other storekeepers and a few skilled tradesmen built log cabins around Young's store and the tiny settlement was quickly known as Youngstown.

Upper Canada Settlement and Fortifications

After Britain acquired New France following the French and Indian War, the government allowed only fur trappers and traders into the lands that would become Upper Canada. This policy minimized conflict with Canada's First Nation peoples. However, after the American Revolution, patriots in the thirteen states were quick to dispossess many of their Tory neighbors. Britain evacuated thousands of its citizens to the sugar islands of the Caribbean or to the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It proved exceedingly difficult to settle these newcomers, many from large urban centers of the east coast, into these two provinces. In 1784, Governor General Sir Frederick Haldimand opened the area west of the Ottawa River to white settlement. Several thousand loyalists moved into the lands along the shores of Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence and Niagara Rivers. These United Empire Loyalists brought with them an abiding hatred of everything the new republic to the south stood for. These settlers and their children would form the hard core of Britain's defensive efforts during the war. In 1791, Britain organized this land into the province of Upper Canada with John Graves Simcoe as its lieutenant governor.

Between 1791 and the 1812, two additional streams of white settlers entered Upper Canada. The first was a small flow of immigrants directly from Britain. The second, however, was a flood of Americans looking for land. The government of British North America invited loyalist Americans into Upper Canada if they would give an oath of allegiance to the crown. This oath was tolerated as the price of otherwise free land. These American emigrants were not earnest nationalists; many were the disaffected residue of the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania. Some were Quakers and Mennonites, proscribed by their faith from bearing arms. Regardless of their motivation to move north, they bore no particular loyalty to Britain, oaths notwithstanding. An interesting social dynamic developed. The old-timers, the United Empire Loyalists, had gathered to themselves the key governmental and commercial positions.

The planters among them were by now relatively prosperous. They looked down upon the newcomers who were not sufficiently loyal, sufficiently British.

By 1812, of the 77,000 whites in Upper Canada, nearly two-thirds were recently arrived Americans. However, in Lincoln County, the majority of the 12,000 whites were United Empire Loyalists, their descendants, or immigrants from Britain. Some were the descendants of Butler's Rangers, the Tory unit that had operated out of Fort Niagara during the Revolution. The import of this demographic reality was that the five regiments of Lincoln militia were made up largely of men loyal to the crown.

Virtually all of the white settlers on the Niagara Peninsula lived within twenty miles of the Niagara River or in the narrow corridor north of the escarpment. The vast majority, perhaps as many as ninety percent, lived on farms. The remainder resided in a few small settlements. The strip of land along the Niagara River on the Canadian side was much more densely settled than the land across the river in New York. This was largely because the British gave away land while much of western New York was still in the hands of speculators and developers who needed to make a profit from land sales.

Fort Erie

The British constructed the original Fort Erie in 1764 to protect vessels at anchor while they were loading cargoes destined for fortifications on the upper Great Lakes. Built too close to the water, this fort was damaged repeatedly by ice. In 1805 the British began construction of a second fort, this one well away from Lake Erie. In 1812, Fort Erie consisted of two large stone barracks surrounded by two demi-bastions and a ravelin. The earthworks were faced with timbers, connected by an earthen wall, and surrounded by a dry ditch. The British had a number of guns varying in size from 3-pounders to 24-pounders mounted in the fort.

Chippawa

The village at Chippawa consisted of about twenty residences and a number of storehouses. Chippawa was a connecting point along the trade route from Montreal to the interior of the province. Water traffic brought furs and grain to Chippawa, the southern terminus of

the portage around Niagara Falls and the gorge. From Chippawa, a stream of wagons carried cargoes to and from the village of Queenston. At Chippawa, a long and substantial wooden bridge spanned the Chippawa River. During the war, the British constructed an earthen wall, a tete-de-pont fortification protecting the southern end of the bridge from direct gunfire. The British also built blockhouses near the bridge to further protect it from attack.

Queenston

Figure 8. Fort Erie Interior.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Old Fort Erie, Niagara Parks, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

This prosperous village stood at the foot of the escarpment. It was the connecting point, like Chippawa, between wagon traffic and water traffic. Schooners and other small vessels landed at Queenston to unload cargoes of finished goods and to take on grain and furs. Wagons moving along the river from Chippawa transloaded their cargoes at warehouses in Queenston. Many of the local farmers became teamsters between planting and harvesting seasons. The village itself consisted of nearly one hundred residences, many of them substantial buildings of brick and stone. About four miles west of Queenston lay the small settlement at St. Davids.

Fort George

Fort George was constructed between 1796 and 1799 as a counter to Fort Niagara 1200 yards away. Fort George consisted of six bastions faced with timbers and connected by an earthen wall that was topped by a wooden stake palisade. The whole was surrounded by a shallow ditch. The walls stood roughly twelve feet above the level plain upon which the fort stood. Inside the walls stood two large blockhouses as well as several wooden barracks, officer quarters, and storehouses. Also within the ramparts was a stone magazine that protected ammunition and barrels of gunpowder. Ammunition was also stored within the bastions for easy access during a fight.

Between Fort George and the Niagara stood Navy Hall, which was a large barracks building. The British maintained a wharf on the river as well as several public and private storehouses.

Fort George was on slightly higher ground than Fort Niagara, a circumstance that gave the British gunners a distinct advantage over

Figure 9. Fort George.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Fort George National Historic Site, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

their American counterparts.

Niagara/Newark

The largest settlement on the Niagara Peninsula was the town of Newark with a pre-war population of 1500. Newark had been the capital of Upper Canada until the government moved to York (now Toronto). While the official name of the village was Newark, the locals called it Niagara. Today, this picturesque city is named Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Large numbers of citizens, many of them militiamen, left Niagara at the beginning of the war when it became obvious that the city and nearby Fort George would be objects of American attack. Some of them returned to the United States but most moved inland to avoid the fighting. During the war, the population was about 600, mostly women and children and older men.

The village itself was about a mile square with orchards, pastures, and gardens intermixed with stone and wooden homes, barns, and other outbuildings. The village was home to two churches, six taverns, twenty stores, a print shop, an academy, and nearly one hundred residences. South of Niagara was an open area that extended about a mile and ended at Fort George. A log Indian Council House was situated on this common area.

West to Burlington Heights

The land west of Niagara and north of the escarpment was dotted with prosperous farms but few villages of note. Stoney Creek flowed into Lake Ontario a few miles east of Burlington Bay and a very small settlement of that name existed there. Overlooking Burlington Bay and west of Burlington Heights was the village of Ancaster. During the war, this village was the scene of the trials of dozens of Canadian traitors. These trials resulted in eight executions. The condemned men were first hung and then beheaded, the traditional punishment in English law for traitors. This event is still known as the “Bloody Assize” of Ancaster.

The Grand River Settlement

While not technically in the Niagara Region, the native settle-

ment on the Grand River figured into the conflict. The Grand River flows into Lake Erie approximately forty miles west of the Niagara River. After the Revolution, the Iroquois chief Thayendanega, whose English name was Joseph Brant, brought hundreds of his followers into Canada at the invitation of the British government. This group had been on the losing side in the Revolution and the Americans had no goodwill for their former enemies. Brant's settlement was home to refugee Indians, blacks, and some whites. They constructed cabins of timber rather than live in the traditional longhouses. By 1812, there were as many as 1800 persons associated with the Grand River Settlement. Approximately 300 were warriors. While some joined in the fighting as allies of the British, a sizable number maintained neutrality throughout the conflict.

The extensive fighting during the war touched virtually everyone in the Niagara Region, whether military, civilian, or native. Besides death or wounding in battle, illness raged in the camps. Destruction of civilian and native homes incited retaliation. Soldiers and natives burned hundreds of homes and businesses on both sides of the river. The American Army came of age along the Niagara River, but not before several humiliating defeats. The following chapters examine the various campaigns fought along this beautiful river and countryside.

Chapter 3

The 1812 Campaign

Campaign Overview

The Senate passed the war bill on 18 June 1812. The House had passed the bill two weeks earlier. News reached New York City on 21 June and Buffalo five days later. The War Department gave command in the Northeast to Major General Henry Dearborn and an independent command in the Northwest to Brigadier General William Hull. Dearborn met with Secretary of War William Eustis and President Madison to shape a strategy to seize Canada. The three decided to invade Canada at three points. Dearborn would make the major incursion along the traditional invasion route from Lake Champlain north along the Richelieu River to seize Montreal. Hull and New York militia Major General Stephen van Rensselaer would make supporting attacks across the Detroit and Niagara Rivers respectively. Madison would offer Canada back to Britain in exchange for concessions. If Britain refused, Madison proposed retaining Canada.

Unfortunately, Dearborn did not understand that he was to coordinate the three invasions or that van Rensselaer was under his orders. Dearborn's first act was to visit the governors of the New England states to coordinate the mobilization of the state militia's into a federal force. In this he was gravely disappointed. The governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut insisted that the requirement of the Constitution to allow federalization, imminent invasion, had not been met, and therefore they withheld their state armies. A chastened Dearborn returned to his major rendezvous and training camp at Greenbush near Albany on 26 July.

Hull invaded the province of Upper Canada across the Detroit River on 12 July, but his campaign quickly unraveled due to the aggressive reaction of Major General Sir Isaac Brock. Brock forced Hull to withdraw from Canada back to the fort at Detroit on 7 August. Brock and the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh, followed Hull and laid siege to Detroit. Fearful of a massacre of the civilians in Detroit, Hull surrendered that city and his army on 16 August. Brock took

his small force of regulars and sped to the Niagara region where he expected the next invasion.

Lieutenant General Sir George Prevost was the governor in chief of British North America and responsible for the defense of Canada. When he learned that Parliament had revoked the Orders in Council, he contacted Dearborn to propose an armistice to allow for a possible negotiation of peace. Dearborn accepted the armistice on 9 August. However, President Madison was unwilling to forgo his war aims and Dearborn acquiesced, canceling the armistice on 8 September. Meanwhile, the War Department was ordering newly raised companies and under-strength regiments to Greenbush and the Niagara. Governor Daniel Tompkins of New York, an unwavering supporter of the war, mobilized regiments of detached militia and sent them to Sackett's Harbor, Lake Champlain, and to the Niagara.

Stephen van Rensselaer, along with his cousin and aide, Lieutenant Colonel Solomon van Rensselaer, arrived on the Niagara River in the middle of August. There, he discovered various parties of regulars and militiamen scattered along the river line. Van Rensselaer ordered the incoming militiamen to gather at a camp just east of Lewiston. The militia units trudged into camp without the necessary weapons, ammunition, and equipment to carry out military operations. Many of the men were shoeless after the long trek from the inland counties to the border of the state. There were insufficient tents to protect the men from the late summer rains, few axes and shovels, no medical supplies, and too few camp kettles to prepare food. Rations arrived irregularly. Solomon van Rensselaer had served in the regular army and knew how to organize a camp. He threw himself into the work of laying out the camp, organizing the distribution of food, establishing a rotation of camp guards, and beginning a simple program of instruction.

Lake vessels carrying supplies and men from Oswego could not land at Fort Niagara because they would be subject to fire from Fort George. Therefore, men and cargo were landed at the mouth of Four Mile Creek on Lake Ontario, aptly named for its distance from Fort Niagara. Also, the river road between Lewiston and Fort Niagara was exposed to fire from the Canadian shore, so the men

cut a road inland through the woods between their camp and Four Mile Creek.

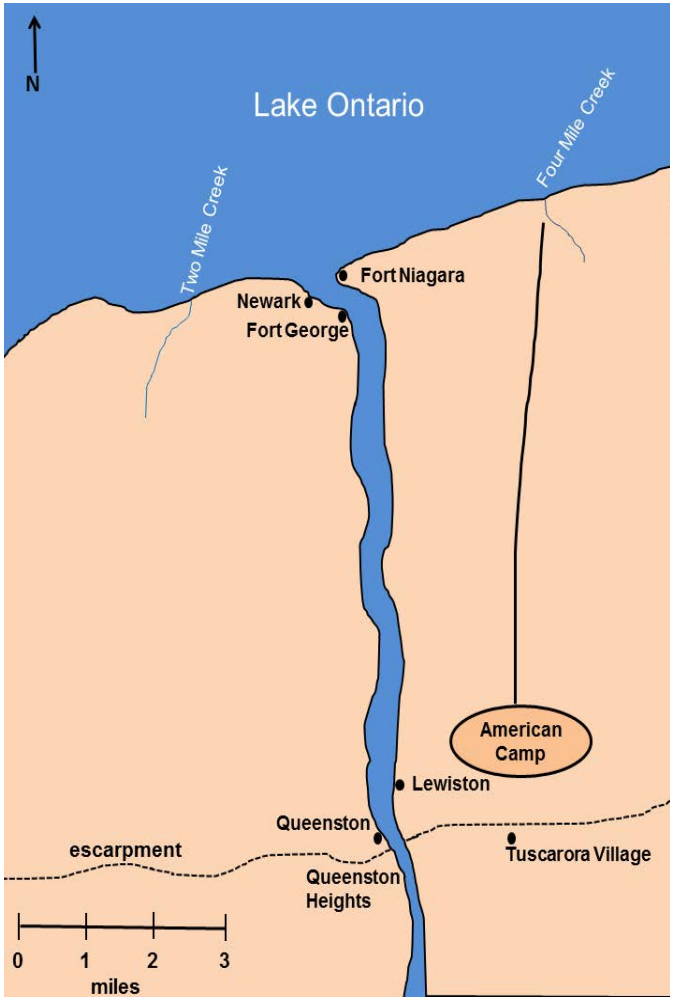

Figure 10. Northern Niagara River (from Queenston Heights North to Fort Niagara).

On 1 September, van Rensselaer reported that only 691 militiamen were fit for duty from among more than 1600 assigned to his command. There were fewer than ten rounds of ammunition per man. The sight of the American prisoners from Hull's surrender walking along the river road from Fort Erie to Fort George com-

pletely demoralized van Rensselaer's army. Years later, an anonymous witness to this event wrote:

> At this time too when it was supposed that Genl. Hull was in possession of [Fort] Malden, he and his army marched down on the opposite side of the river within a quarter of a mile of us as prisoners of war. Never did I see such an excitement of distrust on the part of our Troops, the idea spread through the camp that Hull had sold the Army, and it was soon ascertained that insinuations were made that Genl. Van Rensselaer would do the like. Our Chaplain frequently noticed such reports in his Sermons and pledged his life to the Troops that they would not be Hulled, but the unfortunate impression was not removed.[1]

General van Rensselaer inspected Fort Niagara and judged it easily assailable by a determined British attack. In mid September, General van Rensselaer sent an assessment to Dearborn. Van Rensselaer saw considerable troop activity across the river and he expected raids or perhaps even a major attack. He noted that many of the men's weapons were broken and that the men were only partially trained. Horse teams to pull wagons to move supplies were almost impossible to acquire. There was no grain for the horses of the dragoons or artillery. He ended the letter with the note, "And, to cheer up our hearts, we have picked up a Birch Bark, on which is written a Notice from the Soldiers to the Officers of this little army that unless they were paid, they would absolutely quit the field in 8 days from that time."[2]

That day he also wrote to Governor Tompkins noting the many deficiencies of his force and the apparent intention of the enemy to attack him. He acknowledged his own deficiency as a commander as well. "To perform my duty, arduous as it is, is comparatively easy, but to determine what my duty is, in a wide field of action, where every thing is unshaped and uncertain, is often a task of no small difficulty…."[3] Van Rensselaer feared defeat for the effect it would have upon the country. "A retrograde movement of this army upon the back of that disaster which has befallen the one at Detroit, would stamp a stigma upon the national character which time could never wipe away."[4]

During September, militiamen and regulars marched toward the Niagara. Brigadier General Alexander Smyth, who shortly be-

fore had overseen recruiting from Washington, arrived in Buffalo on 29 September. His arrival revealed some deep fissures in van Rensselaer's command arrangement. As a militia major general, van Rensselaer outranked Smyth, a regular. Yet Smyth refused to physically report to his commander in Lewiston. Instead, he sent a note announcing his assumption of command of the brigade of regular recruits at Buffalo and noting that he was too busy to meet van Rensselaer in person. Smyth also turned down an invitation to participate in the planning activities, responding that he believed that a crossing closer to Buffalo was a better choice. Van Rensselaer clearly understood the dynamics of Smyth's irritating and potentially damaging breach of protocol. Smyth was a firm Republican while van Rensselaer was a leading Federalist. Politics in 1812 were partisan in the extreme and Smyth undoubtedly preferred not to assist in making van Rensselaer popular by gaining a military victory. Also, Smyth harbored an abiding disgust with militia officers who had achieved high rank for their political position.

To further complicate matters, militia Brigadier General Peter B. Porter was also a fervent Republican. As a congressman, he was a noted War Hawk who actively supported Madison's call for war with Great Britain. Porter left the House of Representatives and assumed the position of state quartermaster general. As such, his responsibility was to provide logistical support to van Rensselaer's army. Porter probably performed as well as possible under trying circumstances, but the persisting deficiencies of arms, tents, camp equipment and rations brought Porter into conflict with Solomon van Rensselaer. Solomon was an ardent Federalist in New York politics. A few years earlier, a group of state Republicans brutally attacked Solomon on the streets of Albany in retaliation for a perceived insult. Solomon van Rensselaer never fully recovered his health from the assault and he retained both his physical and emotional scars. Porter and Solomon van Rensselaer each believed the other was deliberately sabotaging the campaign for political reasons. They arranged a duel to settle their differences and only the direct intervention of the commanding general prevented the potential loss of one or both of these competent and zealous officers. Every American leader at Lewiston, militia or regular, Federalist or Republican, wanted victory. Still, mutual suspicions robbed the army of trust and cohesion.

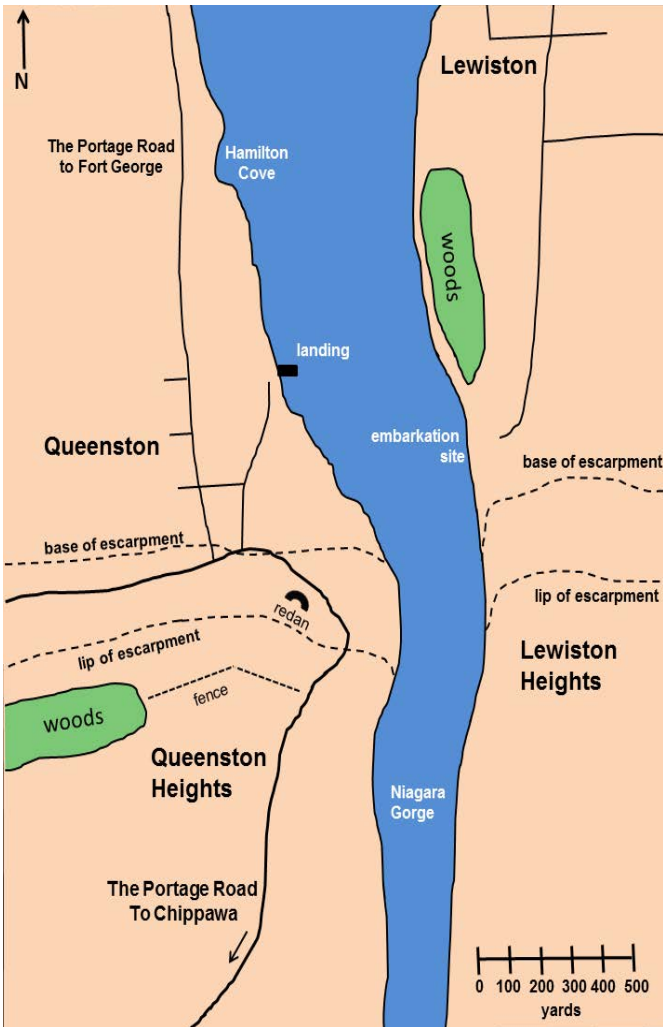

Figure 11. Lewiston-Queenston.

General van Rensselaer chose to cross the Niagara between Lewiston and Queenston. The banks of the river were twenty or more feet high between the escarpment and Fort Niagara seven miles to the north. However, there were cuts in the river bank to allow movement down to the water's edge near both villages, and these were the intended embarkation and disembarkation points. The river here was approximately 500 yards across. The flow of water was turbulent; back currents and eddies would challenge even the most experienced boatmen.

If there was a serious flaw in van Rensselaer's plan, it was the lack of boats. As September flowed into October, the American commander felt increasing pressure to invade Upper Canada and to seize much of the Niagara Peninsula before winter overtook operations. Yet, the army had acquired only thirteen boats. These vessels could carry 350 soldiers in each lift. An experienced helmsman with trained rowers could cross the Niagara at Lewiston in as little as ten minutes. However, adding the time required to embark and disembark 25-30 soldiers as well as a return trip, there would be a minimum of thirty minutes between lifts. Van Rensselaer's army was composed of more than 4,000 soldiers in October. It would take more than a dozen lifts just to transport the men and perhaps another dozen lifts to move supplies, guns, ammunition, rations, horses, equipment, tents and all other impedimenta. If British guns destroyed a boat, or if a boat was swept downriver or suffered any damage, the crossing would be further delayed. Clearly, thirteen boats were insufficient for the invasion.

Isaac Brock and his subordinate, Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe, were proactive in defending the river line at all potential crossing sites. Brock stationed about 200 regulars and 250 militiamen at Queenston, including two companies of the 49th Regiment of Foot. There was a formidable battery consisting of an eighteen-pounder gun and an eight-inch mortar in a stone redan about two-thirds of the way up the escarpment. This large gun was only 600 yards from the American embarkation point and posed a threat to crossing boats. The British also posted a nine-pounder gun near the landing at Queenston and two more large guns at Vrooman's Point directly across the river from Lewiston. The British set up a system of signal fires and couriers to warn them of the location of the American crossing. Both Brock and Sheaffe were at Fort George, only a two hour march from Queenston. There were about 230 soldiers of the 41st Regiment of Foot and another 300 militia at Fort George and another 150 regulars of the 41st at Chippawa eight miles to the south. The infantrymen were supported by smaller detachments of artillery gunners, militia, and about a hundred native warriors under their war chief John Norton. All told, there were more than 1300 fighting under the British flag on the day of battle.

General van Rensselaer's original plan was to cross at two points. He would command a crossing of militia from near Lewiston and Brigadier General Smyth would depart Four Mile Creek and land his regulars on the shores of Lake Ontario west of Fort George. Successful landings would tie down most of Brock's available manpower and limit his options. However, Smyth's obstruction and lack of proper subordination persuaded van Rensselaer to eliminate Smyth's role in the plan. Van Rensselaer felt the very considerable pressure from his militiamen to either conduct the attack or send them to their homes. He was also aware, through letters from friends in Albany, that any delay would be attributed by his many political enemies to incompetence or treason. The New York militia general knew that he had to attack regardless of the readiness of his army.

Figure 12. Queenston Heights Viewed from New York.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto from Art Park, New York in 2011.

Van Rensselaer planned to cross in the early hours of 11 October. Lieutenant Colonel van Rensselaer prepared the detailed cross-

ing plan. The first wave would consist of half regulars and half militia. The selected militiamen had been in camp for more than a month and were fairly well trained in the rudiments of soldiering. Lieutenant Colonel John Chrystie commanded about 300 raw recruits from the 13th US Infantry. Chrystie and about 175 of his soldiers would join van Rensselaer's picked militiamen in that first wave. Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick would command the second wave consisting of 150 regular artillerists fighting as infantry and the residue of Chrystie's battalion. Major James Mullany of the 23d US Infantry would lead a third wave of regulars. Subsequent waves would be composed of militiamen.

The Americans had their own artillery positioned to support the attack. Van Rensselaer placed two eighteen-pounder guns atop Lewiston Heights along with a heavy mortar. Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott of the 2d US Artillery arrived with two six-pounder guns. Van Rensselaer positioned these on the riverbank just south of Lewiston.

On 10 October, the boats were brought to Lewiston by wagon. A number of skilled helmsmen, all civilians, had been hired to pilot the boats during the day of the attack. That evening, a Lieutenant Sims of the militia commanded the lead boat in a move upriver from Lewiston to the embarkation point nearly a mile to the south. Sims inexplicably abandoned the convoy and departed in his boat along with a number of oars and oarlocks. The mysterious Sims was never seen again. Van Rensselaer called off the crossing while his boatmen sorted out boats, oars, and oarlocks and pulled the boats into the cut at the embarkation point. That evening and throughout the day of 12 October, a heavy rainstorm soaked the men in their campsites. British observers saw and reported much of this activity to Brock.

The Battle of Queenston Heights

At about 0300 on 13 October, Solomon van Rensselaer ordered the loading to begin. However, there was no staging area established nor officers designated to organize each wave. Lieutenant Colonel Chrystie ignored the load plan and put all his men into the boats. Solomon van Rensselaer thought better of enforcing the load plan that gave equal space to regulars and militiamen. He swallowed his anger and gathered his staff and a handful of militiamen and

filled the remainder of the boats. At about 0400 hours the first wave shoved off into the darkness to battle first the treacherous current and then the British.

As the first boat approached the landing site, a gravel beach beneath a forty foot embankment, British sentries fired killing Lieutenant John Valleau and wounding others. Ten boats landed one by one and the men scrambled to the top of the embankment. There they formed and awaited orders. Included in this small band were Captain John E. Wool and Lieutenant Stephen Watts Kearney, who would both acquire fame during the war with Mexico. The British reacted quickly. Two companies of infantry attacked the landing party and a violent, deadly firefight ensued resulting in the wounding of van Rensselaer and Wool, and the wounding or death of several other American officers. Yet the Americans prevailed and the British withdrew back to the village of Queenston. Receiving five or six wounds and losing blood quickly, van Rensselaer ordered his aide to cover him with his overcoat so that the men would not see. When it became apparent that Chrystie was nowhere in sight and that he himself was unable to remain in command, van Rensselaer turned to Wool with orders to take the redan. Already the British artillery was firing into the river and at the embarkation site. The Americans piled the dead and wounded into the boats and sent them back for the next wave.

Lieutenant Colonel Chrystie and three boatloads of men were caught in the current. Their pilots couldn't or wouldn't take the boats to shore. Frustrated, Chrystie ordered the three boats to return to the embarkation point to try again. Confusion reigned at the embarkation site. Boats returned one by one and the men saw the dead and wounded being unloaded. The officers got the regulars into boats and pushed away from the shore in the pre-dawn light.

Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick gathered four boats together. This group headed downriver and attempted to land at Hamilton Cove at the northern end of the village of Queenston. Before the boats could reach the shore, they were taken under fire by British regulars and Canadian militia lining the embankment. British grapeshot killed or wounded thirteen Americans in a single discharge. Fenwick landed the men who attempted to mount the cliff. Fen-

wick himself received multiple wounds. The British descended the embankment and many of the American regulars surrendered after a short, sharp fight. Major James Mullany's boat sank as it hit the shore. He gathered a few soldiers and ordered them to place the nearby wounded into an empty boat. Mullany's party pushed away and returned to the New York shore.

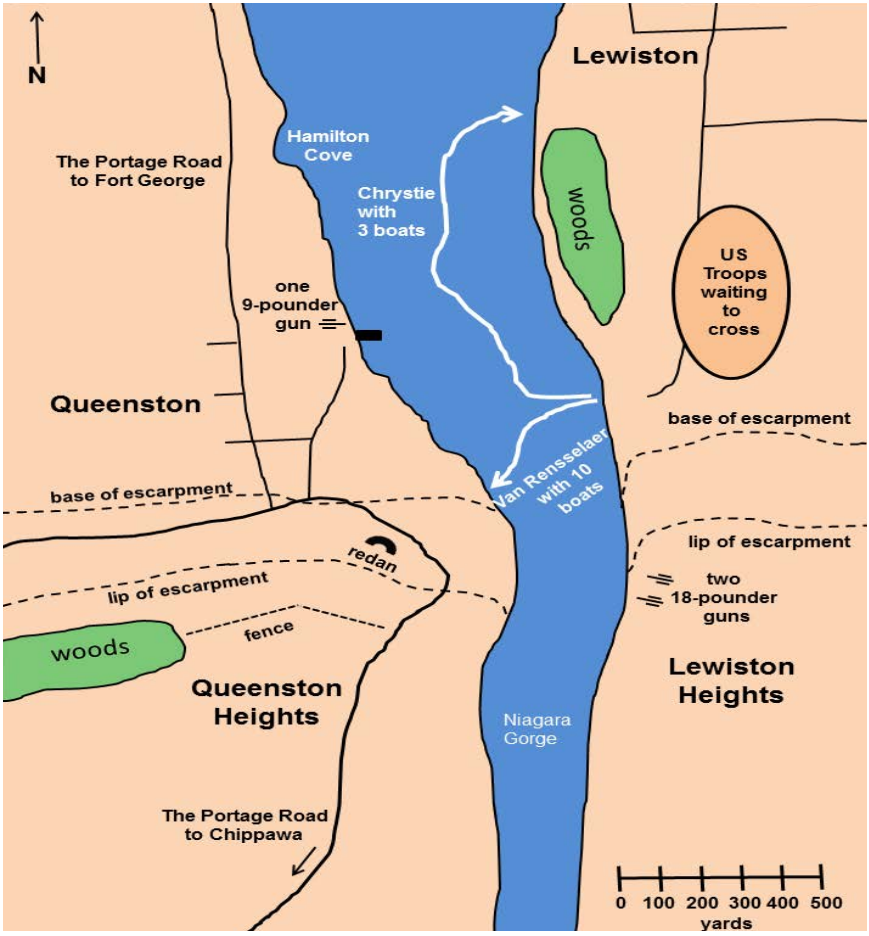

Figure 13. Initial River Crossings.

Back at the initial landing site, Captain Wool and Lieutenant John Gansevoort led their men into the river gorge searching for a way to mount the escarpment. Gansevoort found a trail and a party of fewer than 180 Americans climbed the steep slope and eventually

gained the summit. Now, in daylight, the Americans assaulted down the face of the escarpment and overran the British gun in the redan, forcing the British and Canadian gunners to flee downhill. Meanwhile, the American artillery on Lewiston Heights had silenced the nine-pounder gun at Queenston.

Meanwhile at Fort George, General Isaac Brock heard the thunder of the guns. He quickly mounted his horse and rode to Queenston, a trip that took him nearly an hour. Brock left no orders for Sheaffe. Both Brock and Sheaffe had surmised in the days leading up to the battle, that any landing at Queenston would be a feint. The main attack would come across Lake Ontario and be directed west of Fort George. Unknown to them, of course, they had derived General van Rensselaer's original operations plan. Brock arrived at Queenston and assessed the situation. The loss of the heavy gun in the redan was critical. Without British artillery, American boats could approach the shore at will.

Brock was a man of action and an inspirational leader. He quickly gathered about fifty soldiers and militiamen around him and he personally led an assault up the slope. The Americans about the redan opened fire. One American moved forward, took deliberate aim, and fired. The musket ball entered Brock's chest, close to his heart. Within seconds, the general expired and the impromptu attack collapsed. Atop the escarpment, Canadian Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonnell, Brock's provincial aide, and a small party of regulars and militia moved to recapture the redan battery. They got within thirty yards of the battery when American musketry cut down every officer. Macdonnell was wounded in several places and died shortly thereafter. This second attempt to recapture the vital eighteen-pounder gun failed. Surviving British and Canadian officers withdrew their men from Queenston and rallied them near the battery at Vrooman's Point.

Now there was a lull in the battle lasting into the afternoon. All order at the embarkation site was lost. Regulars entered the remaining boats and crossed over. Companies of New York uniformed volunteers, including several detachments of riflemen, then crossed over. Groups from the five regiments of detached militia, led by four of the five regimental commanders, climbed into boats to reinforce the army. In all, about 700 New York volunteers and militiamen

crossed over. Militia Brigadier General William Wadsworth crossed, hoping that his example would persuade other citizen-soldiers to follow him. Yet, most of the militiamen had lost their courage and with it, their commitment to the invasion. Watching the dead and wounded returning in the boats was too much for them to bear.

With his cousin Solomon severely wounded, General van Rensselaer was at a loss for how he might influence the operation. He rode among the wavering militiamen urging them in vain to get into the boats. Winfield Scott asked for permission to leave his men and the two guns in Lewiston and to cross the river. Van Rensselaer granted Scott's request. Atop the escarpment, the Americans established defensive lines facing in three directions with their backs to the Niagara Gorge. General Wadsworth was delighted to see Scott join the army and yielded effective command to the tall, young regular officer. No one on the New York shore thought to send axes or entrenching tools across, so the defenders improvised their defensive lines along rail fences or stacks of brush and deadfall. Scott realized that the flow of reinforcements had slowed to a trickle. He prepared his men, as best he could, to stand up to the expected counterattack.

Meanwhile, at Fort George, Major General Sheaffe ordered the garrison to assemble to receive orders. As militia and regulars formed ranks on the parade ground outside of the fort, American artillery in Fort Niagara and batteries along the river banks opened fire. The Americans had been heating round shot in ovens for hours. Soon barracks and warehouses in the fort and private homes in the village of Newark were aflame. Sheaffe ordered the guns of the fort and supporting batteries to return fire. The vicious cannonade lasted all morning. Once Sheaffe was satisfied that there were no American vessels on Lake Ontario poised to land, he decided to send troops to Queenston. Company after company of regulars and militia marched off, Sheaffe well ahead of the column.

The first reinforcement to arrive at the battlefield was John Norton at the head of about eighty native warriors from the Grand River settlement. Norton's men crept close to the American lines from the south. Their piercing yells, easily heard on the New York shore, added greatly to the constitutional argument taken by the reluctant militiamen. The constitution did not authorize federal officers to order militiamen to leave the country without their agree-

ment. Scott organized a few companies of regulars and militia to attack Norton's Iroquois. The Americans moved forward, stopping at intervals to deliver fire by platoons. Norton's men retired and sniped from behind trees from a distance. Scott realized that the native warriors would retire as he advanced, unwilling to come into contact with American bayonets. Scott returned to his lines, his soldiers pleased with their success. At about this time, General van Rensselaer, Lieutenant Colonel Chrystie, and Major Mullany joined Scott on the heights. These officers met with Scott and Wadsworth to discuss the situation. Ammunition was running short and the bulk of the American army was still in New York. Chrystie offered that there was an opportunity to call off the invasion and use the remaining boats to evacuate. Van Rensselaer decided to continue the fight. However, he himself returned to New York to inspire more militiamen to cross over and to hurry ammunition forward.

However, not all the Americans on the Canadian shore were as courageous as those with Scott. As van Rensselaer returned to his boat, he was swamped by dozens of Americans who had left their units and were waiting for boats to return to safety. Van Rensselaer learned later that hundreds of Americans, regulars and militiamen, had sought shelter in the woods on the slope hoping to avoid detection by the Indians lurking above.

At about 1400 the Americans with Scott saw Sheaffe's approach march. Sheaffe brought nearly 250 regulars and 300 militiamen with him from Fort George. Rather than march along the river road where they would be subject to American artillery fire, the British and Canadians moved inland and took a trail that brought them up the escarpment well to the west of the American position. Once atop the heights, Sheaffe was joined by 250 regulars and militiamen who had marched north from Chippawa. Slowly and deliberately, the British approached Scott's command from the west and south. The American position had the gorge to the east and the brow of the escarpment to the north. If the British attack succeeded, there would be no easy escape.

Sheaffe ordered the assault at about 1500. The British and Canadians moved forward, stopping to fire and reload at intervals. The Americans returned fire. Scott directed a fighting withdrawal down the slope to the debarkation site. Most of the troops stayed with

their companies, but several panicked and ran for the edge of the gorge, falling to their deaths on the jagged rocks. Native warriors got among the retreating Americans, killing and scalping. When the body of Americans gathered on the low ground, there were no boats waiting. Some desperate Americans plunged into the river; none arrived at the other side. Scott made two attempts to surrender, sending officers forward to locate British soldiers. However, Indians fired on both parties. Finally, Scott himself, along with two other officers, set off to find someone to surrender to. A small group of natives fired upon Scott and were in the process of taking them prisoner when a British officer arrived to speak with Scott. Word of the American offer to surrender finally reached Sheaffe who then ordered buglers to sound the cease fire. Wadsworth gave up his sword to Sheaffe and the hard post-battle tasks began.

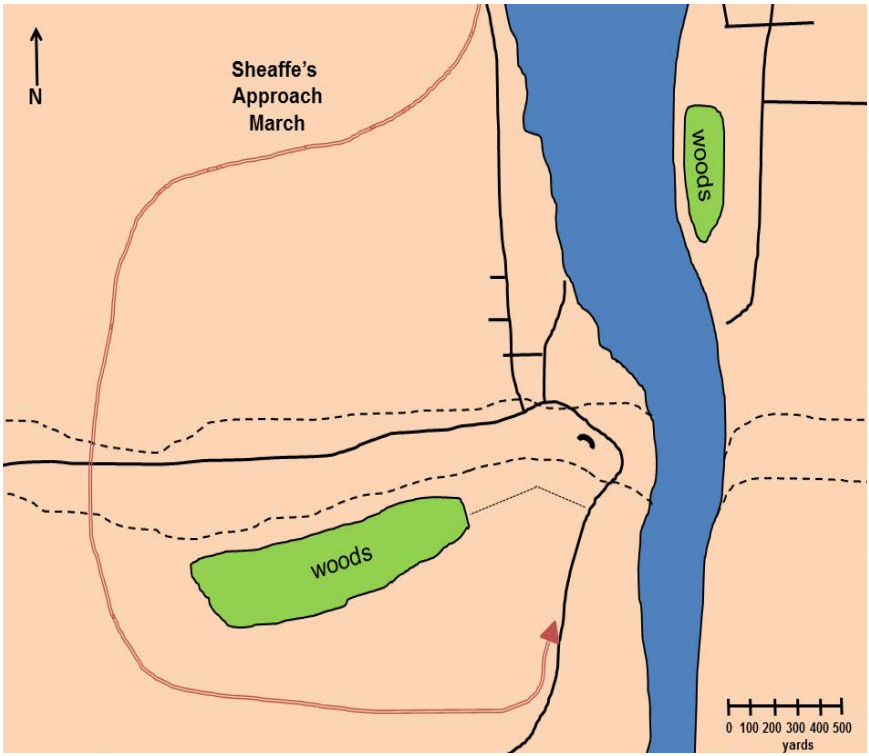

Figure 14. Sheaffe's Approach March and Attack.

The Aftermath

Other than prisoners, American casualties were moderate. Stephen van Rensselaer reported 60 dead and 170 wounded. Sheaffe reported capturing 436 regular soldiers and 489 militiamen. The victorious British commander was generous in paroling the militia and a handful of regulars were exchanged for British soldiers in American hands. The British also took possession of a silk flag of the New York militia, a six-pounder gun, and hundreds of American firearms. Sheaffe sent most of the remaining American prisoners to Quebec. This group, including Winfield Scott, was exchanged in November and back in Boston in December.

The British casualties were comparatively light. Sheaffe reported twenty killed in action and another 85 wounded. Additionally, about five Iroquois allies lost their lives and an unknown number, including John Norton, wounded.

General van Rensselaer yielded command to Brigadier General Smyth. Governor Daniel Tompkins traveled to Buffalo, met with the defeated general, and accepted his resignation. Van Rensselaer returned to his estates near Albany, where he was greeted by supporters with praise rather than criticism. Although he failed to defeat Tompkins for the governorship the following year, van Rensselaer's reputation had not been tarnished by his unsuccessful campaign. His cousin, Solomon, eventually recovered from his wounds sufficiently to return to civilian life. He tried unsuccessfully to gain a regular commission and perhaps regimental command. Like his general, Solomon's reputation was not discredited by the catastrophic results of the campaign. Solomon re-assumed his duties as adjutant general of the state militia, but never again saw active service.

Alexander Smyth, with the support of Dearborn and Secretary of War Eustis, decided to re-ignite the campaign. Smyth hoped to correct two deficiencies in van Rensselaer's plan. First, he planned to invade nearer to Black Rock, where the river banks were low. Second, he would ensure that he had sufficient boats to carry the entire force in one wave. Hundreds of disgusted New York militiamen returned to their homes after the battle without orders. Two brigades of Pennsylvania militia marched to the frontier and these troops made up the bulk of Smyth's invasion force. The Americans

gathered together about seventy boats, enough to carry most of Smyth's 2000 men. Many of these troops were too sick to perform their duties and the weather was particularly foul on 28 November when Smyth finally moved. Smyth sent two advance parties across the Niagara to capture some enemy artillery and to control a bridge. Both parties had to retire in the face of determined counterattacks. Smyth called off the main crossing and his men trudged back to their camps. On 1 December, Smyth tried once again. The Americans loaded into boats, but Smyth again called off the crossing. This time, the American militiamen were mutinous with Smyth's perceived timidity and general ineffectiveness, clamoring to return to their homes since they were doing nothing of value in their cold camps. The War Department was entirely dissatisfied with the ineffectual Smyth, and dropped him from the rolls of general officers in March 1813. The fighting on the Niagara River was done for the year.

Suggested Stands

Introduction

The 1812 campaign was resolved at the Battle of Queenston Heights. The government's mobilization efforts were incomplete, particularly since they were built upon the Republican Party's years of neglect. America's reliance on untrained regulars and militia as well as inexperienced officers was shown to be unfounded. Faulty logistics support on the American part contributed to the loss. Nonetheless, a study of the battle is instructive. Certainly the dynamics of the battle were shaped by small unit leadership on both sides. The battle can be analyzed from three accessible stands on the Canadian side. Although Smyth made two abortive attempts to continue the campaign, the terrain on both shores near Buffalo and Fort Erie is heavily urbanized and yields nothing informative.

Stand 1

The Wharf at Queenston

Directions: Queenston is easily accessible from the Niagara Parkway. Travelers can access the Niagara Parkway from the Peace Bridge in Buffalo or, perhaps more directly, from the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. This major bridge is at the northern terminus of Interstate-190/New York State Thruway-Niagara Section. The Niagara Parkway forms the western border of Queenston. Turn east on any of the streets in Queenston to access Princess Street/Front Street. Dumfries Street provides the most easily accessible road to the public boat dock. The narrow gravel road wends its way down the wooded slope and leads directly to the water's edge. In 1812 there were many fewer trees throughout the Queenston area, to include the slope and top of the escarpment. There is adequate public parking for half a dozen vehicles at the landing.

Orientation: Stand on the dock and look across the river toward New York. The American shore is currently wooded, although in 1812 many of the trees had been removed for firewood making American activities much more visible to British gunners. The village of Lewiston to the left-front is much larger today than in 1812. Now, shifting the line of sight to the right, stop at the base of the escarpment (Lewiston Heights). The natural cut in the river bank is difficult but not impossible to discern amidst the trees. This is the embarkation site. The Americans assembled east of the cut and moved into it to load into the boats. Lewiston Heights is marked by a visible ledge in the escarpment. This is Artpark, a part of the state park system. The Americans positioned a mortar somewhere on this flatter terrain. The top of the escarpment is the location of Fort Gray, the site of a battery of two eighteen-pounder guns. Fort Gray was nothing more than the gun battery.

Viewed from water level, the back-currents and transient eddies are usually quite visible. The initial crossing was made in the dark and through the uncertain Niagara currents. Veterans noted that the morning was windy as well. Subsequent crossings in daylight were challenged by cannon fire from the eighteen-pounder in the

redan and by a nine-pounder gun positioned in or near a stone blockhouse somewhere near the landing.

On the morning of 13 October 1812, Lieutenant Colonel van Renssalaer's party did not land at the wharf. Instead, the pilots brought the boats to shore at the base of the escarpment about three hundred yards south of the Queenston dock. This area is not easily accessible for staff riders. At that point, the embankment was not cut as it is at the wharf. However, American fire from Fort Gray silenced the close by nine-pounder and subsequent boatloads very likely disembarked at the Queenston landing. In the daylight it was readily visible and troops could surmount the embankment by the trail marked by the current gravel road.

Situation: Shortly after 0400 the ten boats in van Rensselaer's party landed on a narrow gravel beach at the base of a forty foot embankment. Solomon van Rensselaer was in one of the last boats to land. A small party of British infantry had seen the American approach and fired into the boats before departing to warn the garrison in Queenston. Lieutenant John Valleau was killed in the opening fire and several others were wounded. The Americans clawed their way up the steep embankment and formed line in the dark but on level ground. Van Rensselaer gave the order to seize Queenston Heights. He formed the men, approximately 225 soldiers, into column and started out toward the redan battery. British artillery opened fire onto the American shore or toward any craft visible in the water. Their shots were ineffectual largely because of the darkness. Gunners could not acquire targets or judge ranges accurately. Fortunately, van Rensselaer's men were in dead space relative to their objective, the eighteen-pounder above them.

British Captain James Dennis in Queenston gathered two companies of regulars augmented by some militiamen and marched in the dark to find and repel the invaders. The Americans perceived the approach of the British and faced about to confront them. The confused firefight that followed was sharp and violent. The result was the withdrawal of Captain Dennis's force and the death or wounding of seven of the eleven American officers. Solomon van Rensselaer received five or six musket wounds and had to be evacuated. Captain John Wool, although painfully wounded in the buttocks, con-

tinued on. Wool and the surviving regular officers of the 13th US Infantry had only a vague notion of the topography. Lieutenant John Gansevoort of the Regiment of Light Artillery stepped forward and took the party, now reduced to about 180, into the gorge. There, they located a trail that rose up the precipitous cliffs and eventually brought the party to the crest of the escarpment.

Vignette 1: Solomon van Rensselaer, like soldiers before and after him, wrote a 'last letter' to his spouse in the event that he failed to return from battle. This is an extract from his letter to his pregnant wife Harriot:

> This letter may be the last you will receive from me; if it is, let me beg of you sometimes to cherish my memory and forget any unkindness you may have received from me, for whenever an unkind word has fallen from me, be assured it was not owing to any want of attachment to you, but to the unhappy state of my mind at that moment, owing to my embarrassment and the persecution of my Political enemies who even pursue me to this quarter of the Globe.
>
> My own and the Patroon's Reputations require that the sacrifice should be made. I go to storm an important post of the enemy. Young Lush and Gansevoort attend me. I must succeed, or you my dear Harriot, will never see me again. (Solomon van Rensselaer to wife Harriot, 10 October 1812, in Catherine V.R. Bonney, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings* Albany, New York: J. Munsell, 1875, 247.)

Days later, when Lieutenant Colonel van Rensselaer was in Buffalo recovering from his several gunshot wounds, he received word that Harriot bore him a son, born on 12 October.

Vignette 2: Major John Lovett, secretary to General van Rensselaer, was commanding in Fort Gray during the fight. The day after battle, he wrote to a friend:

> The river is rapid, and full of whirlpools and eddies; the movement [the initial boat crossing] was instantly discovered; the shore was one incessant blaze from musketry; three batteries pelted upon the boats. My battery pelted alternately upon the batteries, and upon musketry on shore; while a snug little mor-

tar near by complimented my battery liberally with shells. In a word the scene was tremendous. The boats were a little embarrassed. But Col. Van Rensselaer made good his landing in a perfect sheet of fire. He had advanced but a few steps when he received a shot through his right thigh, entering just back of the hip bone; he still advanced with his van; received another shot through the same thigh; he still advanced and received a third shot thro' the calf of his left leg; he still advanced till he was really riddled by other balls through his legs and thigh. Thus bleeding at six holes, and very lame in his heel, he halted in fire, and with perfect presence of mind, directed his officers...to rush forward and storm the first battery. It was gallantly done. (John Lovett to Joseph Alexander, 14 October 1812, in Catherine V.R. Bonney, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings*, Albany, New York: J. Munsell, 1875, 266.)

Vignette 3: Captain John Wool of the 13th Infantry wrote to his wife, Sally, four days after the battle:

...about 4 o'clock in the morning we landed under Queenston battery [the battery in the redan] under a heavy fire from their musketry, Queenston battery & Vrooman's Battery down the River about ¼ mile. On our first landing, Col. Van Rensselaer, Capt. [Richard] Malcomb, Capt. [Henry] Armstrong was wounded severely and unable to take command. Lieut. [John] Valleau was killed crossing the river. I had two men wounded while crossing. After I mounted the bank which was about 30 or 40 feet high I attempted with other assistance to form a line of the men, there on top of the bank, which amounted to about 400, which was immediately done directly under Queenston battery. While formed in that position a party of British regulars came up from Vrooman's Battery, and fired upon our right flank, & while in the act of turning round to order the men to face to the right so as to bring them to fire on the enemy, I was shot directly through both hips which created a dizziness for a few moments. When I recovered I found the enemy had retreated. (Wool to wife Sally, 17 October 1812, in the John E. Wool Papers, New York State Library.)

Teaching Points: Planning, initiative, primary leadership, fog, friction.

Stand 2

The Redan

Directions: The redan is surrounded by woods and is accessible by a path from the top of the escarpment. From Queenston Landing, take the access road back into the village of Queenston. Take any of the east-west streets west to the Niagara Parkway. Travel south on the Parkway ascending Queenston Heights. At the traffic circle, enter Queenston Heights Park and park your vehicle. Parks Canada has several markers posted in the park that outline the battle. During the war there was a temporary cantonment area on the northeast corner of the heights. Walk toward the Brock Monument and note the sign on the brow of the escarpment marking the top of the path leading down to the redan. Now descend the slope. The redan holds a large cannon on a garrison carriage.

Orientation: The woods were not present in 1812. Today, because of the foliage, there is no clear view of Lewiston, which would have been easily visible during the battle. Note the narrowness of the ledge on which the redan was built. In 1812 the redan was a simple stone parapet. The British placed an eighteen-pounder gun and an eight-inch mortar upon a timber firing platform.

Situation: On the morning of battle, a couple of Royal artillerymen and a small gun crew from the 1st Lincoln Artillery Company were stationed in the redan. Once there was sufficient light to do so, the crew identified the American embarkation point and directed its fire toward that target. The crew fired shell and spherical case. The Americans had not experienced spherical case, a new type of ammunition more deadly than shell. Despite the incoming artillery fire, reinforcements made up of regulars continued to climb into returning boats and shove off for the hostile shore. Captain Peter Ogilvie brought the remainder of the 13th Infantry across the river to join Captain Wool's detachment before it moved into the gorge.

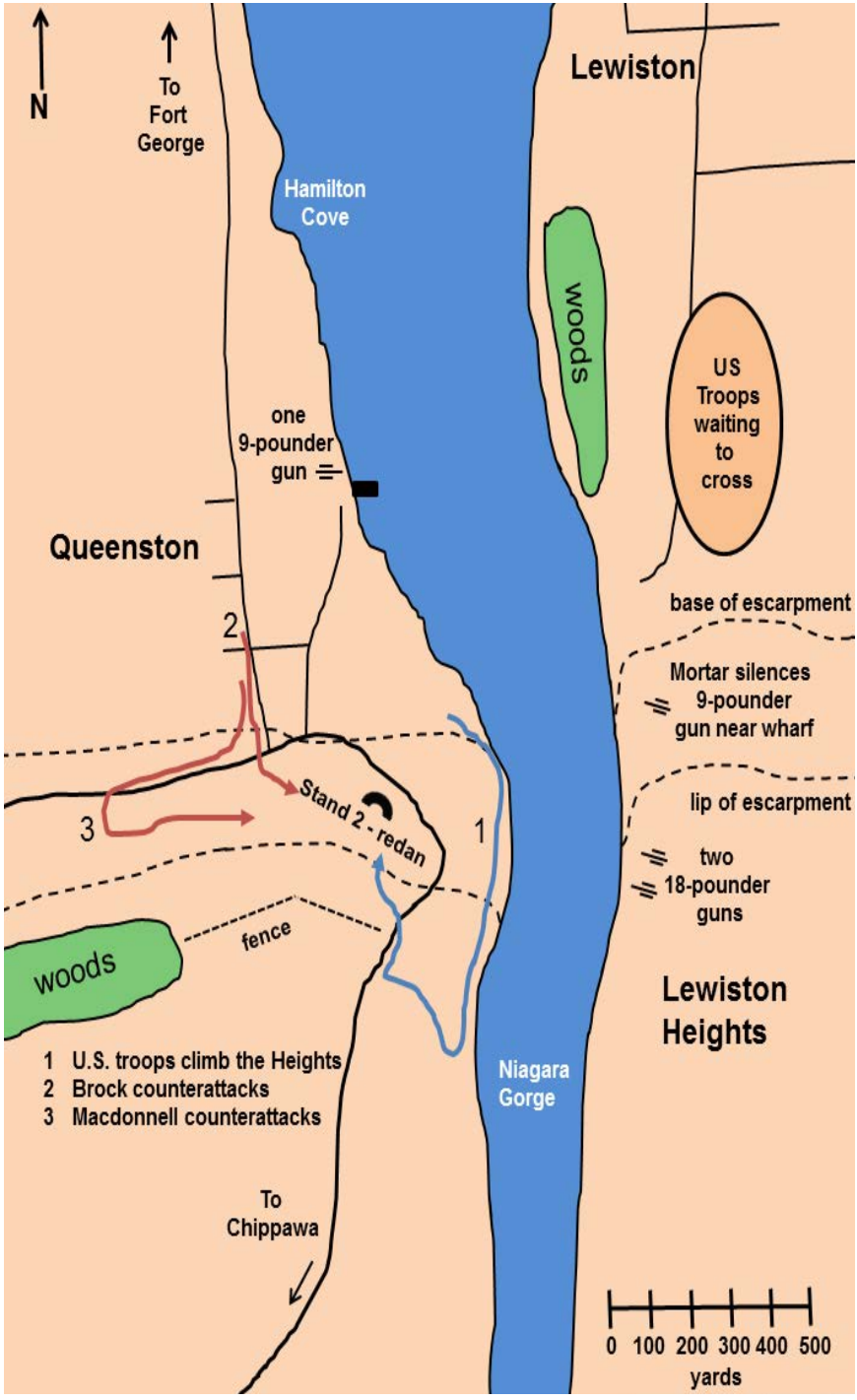

Figure 15. Engagement at Redan.

Once Wool's small battalion reached the top of the escarpment, Wool brought them to the edge. Looking down, they saw the gunners in the redan and Wool ordered his men to advance down the slope. The gunners saw the Americans approaching. Being greatly outnumbered, the gun crew withdrew down the slope. Soon Wool's men occupied the battery. It was about 0700. General Brock soon learned that the redan battery had fallen. He gathered a few soldiers from the Light Company of the 49th Foot and some militiamen, perhaps fifty in number, and led them southward to the foot of the battery. Brock understood that the eighteen-pounder was key to disrupting the flow of boats across the river. Unwilling to send this small group forward under the officers of the Light Company, Brock personally led an assault up the slope. The Americans in the redan quickly identified the general and some of them directed their fire at Brock. One American moved forward from the rest, took careful aim, and felled the gallant British leader. The assault collapsed.

Refusing to give up, Captain John Williams, commander of the 49th's Light Company, gathered his men and moved to the top of the escarpment west of the redan. Some men of the Third York Militia Regiment joined him as did Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonell, Brock's senior aide. By this time, Wool's force had been reinforced by the arrival of two or three small volunteer rifle companies. Macdonell took command of no more than one hundred British and Canadians and at about 0900 advanced against Wool's four hundred. The American lines briefly wavered, but the officers steadied the ranks and an intense firefight ensued. A deluge of lead hit the British attackers and Macdonell, Williams, and other leaders fell. The Americans assaulted, capturing about twenty of the enemy, but not before the British carried Macdonell down the slope. Macdonell died the following day.

An American gun in Fort Gray silenced the nine-pounder positioned near Queenston Landing. Now there were no British guns in range of crossing American boats. During the remainder of the morning reinforcements trickled to the Canadian shore, largely because of the lack of boats. At least three craft had been captured upon landing and one or two floated off down river.

Vignette: When Colonel John E. Wool was Inspector General of the Army, he wrote a letter to W.L. Stone, author of *Life of Brant*,

to clarify the details of the Battle of Queenston. In describing the attack upon the redan, Wool began after the repulse of the British attack on the landing party. He wrote:

> Shortly after the enemy had retreated Ju[d]ge Advocate Lush came and informed me that Colonel Van Rensselaer was mortally wounded, with orders from the Colonel to retire with the troops to the shore. As soon as it was light I repaired to Colonel Van Rensselaer and asked him what could be done? He replied he did not know. I remarked that some thing must be done soon or we would all be taken prisoners. His reply was that he knew of nothing unless we could take Queenston heights. Although wounded, a musket ball having passed through both my thighs, I offered to undertake the enterprise. It was no sooner communicated to such of the officers of the 13th able to march, consisting of, besides myself, Captain [Peter] Ogilvie, Lieutenants [Daniel] Hugunin, [Stephen Watts] Kearney, [William] Car[r], [George] Reab[e], and [Jacob] Sammons, than they rallied their troops, and with a small detachment of Artillery commanded by Lieutenants [John] Gansevoort & [Thomas] Randolp[h] agreeably to the directions of Colonel Van Rensselaer, ascended the heights and captured the battery. (John Wool to W.L. Stone, 13 September 1838. New York Public Library.)

Teaching points: mission command, initiative, tactical leadership.

Stand 3

The Final Battle on Queenston Heights

Directions: From the redan, retrace your steps to the top of the escarpment and walk to the Brock Monument. (The four situations that follow can be briefed from this location.)

Orientation: The Brock Monument is located inside the American lines, close to the western side of a very rough three-sided position. The Americans had some soldiers in the redan and perhaps a skirmish line stretching from the redan uphill. The bulk of American forces were on the flat ground with some facing west and the rest facing south. Walk about twenty yards westward from the monument. This is roughly the center of the American line that faced west. The southern defensive line was along a rail fence running east and west. A stand of oak trees was somewhere along this line and inside the American position. About two hundred yards across an open field west of the American line stood the edge of an extensive woods.

Situation 1: General Sheaffe, still at Fort George, ordered the men to assemble on the parade grounds. Satisfied that the Americans were not going to attack Fort George from the lake, he ordered much of the garrison southward to Queenston. Captain William Derenzy's Light Company from the 41st Regiment of Foot marched off, soon followed by Captain William Holcroft's two guns and a howitzer as well as several small companies of militia. However, Captain John Norton and his native warriors jogged to the sound of the guns. Norton led his band of native warriors from Fort George to the base of the escarpment, arriving at about 1100. Several of his men had deserted along the way, fearful that the Americans would attack Fort George, where the Indian families were residing. Only about eighty warriors remained with Norton.

Vignette 1: In his journal, Norton recalled the speech he gave preparatory to climbing the slope:

> Comrades and brothers—be men. Remember the fame of ancient warriors, whose breasts were never daunted by odds of numbers. You have run from your encampments to this place to meet the enemy. We have found what we came for. Let no

> anxieties distract your minds; there they are—it only remains to fight. Haste. Let us ascend yon path, by which unperceived, we may gain their rear. Your bullets shall soon spread havoc and dismay among those ranks that form so proudly—exulting in their temporary advantages. Let not their numbers appall you. Look up; it is He above that shall decide our fate. (Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman, editors. *Journal of Major John Norton.* Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1970, 305.)

Norton's warrior band ascended the escarpment well to the west of the American position. Norton circled to the south of the Americans and began his deliberate advance through the woods when he ran into an American skirmish line.

Vignette 2: Lieutenant Jared Willson of Granger's Independent Battalion of Riflemen was taken prisoner at the battle and paroled six days later. The following month he wrote a friend of his experiences during the Battle on Queenston Heights. This is his account of the skirmishing in the late morning and early afternoon:

> The Battalion of Rifle-men, to which I belong were sent out after the first engagement, a mile or more from the main body to make discoveries. We had not been gone long, when a party of Indian Devils—about two hundred, attacked us in the woods. We were far inferior in numbers and of course compelled to retreat precipitately. The savages, greedy for plunder, and thirsting for blood, pursued us closely, firing and yelling, in a most frightful manner. They pursued us close to the main body, but in their turn were compelled to fly to safety. By this time, I thought hell had broken loose and let her dogs of war upon us. In short I expected every moment to be made a 'cold Yanky' as the soldiers say. (Jared Willson to Alvan Stewart, 9 November 1812, Frank H. Severance, editor, "A Rifleman of Queenston," *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society,* 9 [1906]:374.)

Teaching points: Value of skirmishing, psychological warfare, small-unit leadership.

Situation 2: Lieutenant Colonel John Chrystie, commander of the 13th Infantry, crossed over and relieved Captain Wool, whom he sent back to Lewiston to have his wounds treated. The remainder of the six hundred regulars at Lewiston, including Captain James

Gibson with a six-pounder gun, crossed over. Small detachments from the five militia regiments followed the regulars. Along with the militia came their leader, Brigadier General William Wadsworth. Wadsworth assumed command from Chrystie. However, before too long Wadsworth and Chrystie realized that the flow of reinforcements had stopped. Wadsworth sent Chrystie back to the New York shore to report on the situation to General van Rensselaer. In the meantime, Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott had asked van Rensselaer for permission to leave his small artillery detachment near Lewiston and to join the force gathering atop Queenston Heights. Van Rensselaer agreed and Scott crossed over.

Vignette: After conferring with Chrystie, General van Rensselaer crossed the river himself to see the situation atop the heights. Satisfied with preparations to repel an expected British counterattack, the general decided where his presence might be most effective. In his official report to General Dearborn, he wrote:

> By this time, I perceived my troops were embarking very slowly. I passed immediately over to accelerate their movements, but, to my utter astonishment, I found, that, at the very moment when complete victory was in our hands, the ardour of the unengaged troops had entirely subsided. I rode in all directions; urged the men by every consideration to pass over—but in vain. Lieut. Col. [Henry] Bloom, who had been wounded in the action, returned, mounted his horse, and rode through the camp, as did also Judge Peck, who happened to be there exhorting the companies to proceed—but all in vain.

He ended his report:

> The brave men who had gained the victory, exhausted of strength and ammunition, and grieved at the unpardonable neglect of their fellow-soldiers, gave up the conflict. I can only add, that the victory was really won, but lost for the want of a small reinforcement; one-third part of the idle men might have saved all. (Van Rensselaer to Dearborn, 14 October 1812.)

When Scott reported to General Wadsworth, the militia general realized that Scott was the better man to organize and lead the defense of Queenston Heights. Wadsworth gave Scott tactical

command while he spent his efforts exhorting the militiamen to be brave. When Norton's warrior band withdrew from the skirmish with the riflemen, it moved to the wooded area west of the American position. Norton led his warriors forward again, but this time Scott ordered a few companies to advance to confront the Iroquois. John Chrystie had recrossed the river and joined Scott in the attack. Caught in the open and outnumbered, the Indians took several needless casualties. Norton wisely withdrew back into the woods while Scott also withdrew back to his lines. Norton's men sniped at the Americans throughout the afternoon, emitting war cries that terrorized their foe. These war whoops were easily heard on the New York shore, persuading the militiamen to refuse to cross the Niagara.

Teaching points: Command and control, psychological operations.

Situation 3: General Sheaffe concentrated his men, except for Norton's warriors, north of the village of Queenston. He had about six hundred regulars and militiamen. At about 1300 Sheaffe directed a cautious movement to the west and then southward. This kept his column out of range of American guns. He brought his command to the top of the escarpment well to the west of the American position. Sheaffe placed the bulk of his command south of the Americans. He sent light infantrymen to join Norton west of the American position. Eventually, Captain Richard Bullock came up from Chippawa with 150 regulars and 100 militiamen. Sheaffe directed them to join the main body of troops south of the Americans. Sheaffe had about nine hundred men while Scott estimated his defenders at four hundred.

Sometime after 1500, Sheaffe ordered a general advance. The British forces came on, firing volleys as they advanced. The Americans returned fire. The intervening air was filled with clouds of dense white smoke. Scott well knew that his force was doomed and he gave orders for an orderly, phased withdrawal down the escarpment toward Queenston Landing, where he hoped boats would be waiting.

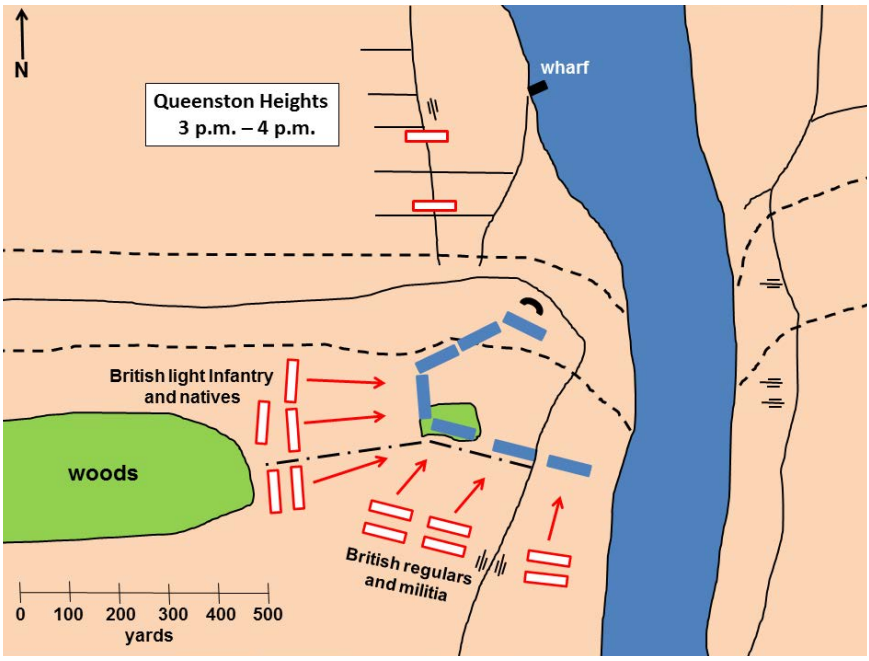

Figure 16. Final Battle at Queenston Heights.

Vignette 1: Lieutenant John Beverly Robinson of the 3rd Regiment of York Militia fought in the battle on top of the heights. The following day he wrote his recollection. Robinson mentions the "Car Brigade." This is the transportation unit for the artillery guns and consists of caissons, ammunition wagons, drivers and horses. These artillery drivers might be cross-trained as gunners, but their primary task was moving guns and ammunition. Robinson recalled that:

> General Sheaffe, with the 41st from Fort George, about 300 in number, came up soon after with the field-pieces and Car Brigade. All the force that could be mustered was collected, and we marched through the fields back of Queenston, ascended the mountain on the right, and remained in the woods in rear of the enemy till intelligence was gained of their position. During this time, the Americans were constantly landing fresh troops unmolested, and carrying back their dead and wounded in their return boats. About three o'clock, General Sheaffe advanced through the woods towards the battery on the mountain, with the main body and the field guns on the right: the Mohawk Indi-

ans, under Captain Norton, and a Niagara Company of Blacks, proceeded along the brow of the mountain on the left; and our company of Militia, with the Light Company of the 49th, broke through the centre. The company of black soldiers was commanded by a white militia officer, Captain Robert Runchey. There were thirty-eight members of this militia company at the battle.

Robinson continued:

In this manner we rushed through the woods to our encamping ground on the mountain, which the enemy had occupied. The Indians were the first in advance. As soon as they perceived the enemy they uttered their terrific war-whoop, and commenced a most destructive fire, rushing rapidly upon them. Our troops instantly sprang forward from all quarters, joining in the shout. The Americans stood a few moments, gave two or three general volleys, and then fled by hundreds down the mountain. At that moment, Captain [Richard] Bullock, with 150 of the 41st and two Militia flank companies, appeared advancing on the road from Chippawa. The consternation of the enemy was complete. They had no place to retreat to, and were driven by a furious and avenging foe, from whom they had little mercy to expect, to the brink of the mountain which overhangs the river. They fell in numbers.... Many leaped down side of the mountain to avoid the horrors which pressed upon them, and were dashed to pieces by the fall. (Robert Henderson (ed.). "An Account of the Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812." www.warof1812.ca/queenston.htm.)

Vignette 2: Captain James Crooks of the First Lincoln Militia Regiment led his company during the battle atop Queenston Heights. He recalled:

While pressing forward into the thick of the battle I espied an Indian giving the coup de grace to a Militia man whom he mistook for a Yankee, none of us being in uniform, but who turned out to be a man from Toronto named Smith.... The battle, although not too long continuance, was a very warm and close one. I have been in many hail storms, but never in one when the stones flew so thick as the bullets on this occasion. The lines

were very near each other, and every foot of ground the enemy gave way gave us an advantage, as on their side descended. After almost half an hour's close engagement they disappeared in the smoke, throwing down their arms, and ran down the heights to the water's edge in the vain hope of reaching their own side, but Holcroft [commanding British artillery] took good care that no boats could cross." (James Crooks, "Recollections of the War of 1812," *Niagara Historical Society Publications* 28 [1916]: 34.)

Vignette 3: Private Archer Galloway, a member of Lieutenant Colonel Philetus Swift's Volunteer Regiment, was present at the battle atop the heights. Galloway recalled the battle in the 1850s:

We saw no more of the enemy until about three o'clock in the afternoon, when they made their appearance again, 1600 strong, under Gen. Sheaffe, and so far outnumbered us that after an hour and a half of hard fighting we were obliged to surrender. At this time the plain was well strewn with red-coats. According to official returns our losses were, killed 78, and 109 wounded; the British had, killed 127, and 191 wounded. Most of the losses occurred in the second and last battle. Col. Scott displayed great military tactics with a view to keeping possession of the field, and I am happy in contemplating the fact that I have served my country under so brave a soldier and as good a man as Gen. Scott. I received a bayonet wound at the storming of the fort." Note: Galloway refers to the redan as the 'fort.' (Archer Galloway, "Firing the First Shot: as told by the Man who fired it," *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society* 5 [1902]:24-5.)

Vignette 4: Rifle Lieutenant Jared Willson recalled:

About 4 o'clock P.M. came on the 'tug of war.' The British forces and Indians united, attacked us spiritedly. We obstinately opposed them, against a shower of Grape-Shot and musketry—but at length fatigued and over powered by numbers, we were forced to lay down our arms. Our men fought well....All this transaction took place in fair view of two thousand militia on the opposite shore (poor dastardly wretches) who would not come to our assistance—had they come we might have held our ground until this time. Oh! Shame on them—there surely

must be a severe punishment in reserve for these poor, ignorant, base-born wretches. The Indian war-hoop even echoed through their camp and still they could not be prevailed upon to mingle with their associates in arms to oppose the inhuman foe." (Jared Willson to Alvan Stewart, 9 November 1812. Frank H. Severance, editor, "A Rifleman of Queenston," *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society,* 9 [1906]:374.)

Teaching points: Morale, inspirational leadership, unit cohesion, and psychological warfare.

Situation 4: There were no boats at the landing. Norton's warriors got ahead of the British regulars and Canadian militiamen pursuing the retreating Americans. The natives were looking for scalps or prisoners. Many Americans sought safety in the woods along the gorge, but were captured over the next few hours. British soldiers fired away at Americans attempting to swim the river. Scott tried at least three times to surrender and eventually British officers arrived to complete the event. Wadsworth rendered his sword to Sheaffe. The wounded from all sides were brought into homes and barns in Queenston village. Canadian militia guarded Americans on their long trek to Fort George and incarceration.

Sheaffe claimed that his men had captured 925 Americans. Over the next few days, British regulars buried the American dead in mass graves. Sheaffe quickly paroled the walking wounded among the militia and sent them across the river. Next, he paroled the remainder of the militia and negotiated an exchange of a small number of regulars. Van Rensselaer sent over his surgeons to assist with treating the wounded. The Americans moved Solomon van Rensselaer to a hotel room in Buffalo to recover. General van Rensselaer reported an estimated sixty American dead to General Dearborn. Many more died from their wounds over the next few weeks. With Stephen van Rensselaer's resignation, the focus of the campaign shifted south to Buffalo and Alexander Smyth's abortive invasion attempts.

Vignette: In his memoirs, Winfield Scott put the responsibility for the defeat on Federalists within the ranks:

> Nothing could have been more painful the position of Major-General Stephen Van Rensselaer during the day of Queenston.

> A citizen of undoubted patriotism and valor, with a weight of moral character very rare—but without military experience—he found himself helpless in his camp, by the machinations in the ranks of demagogues opposed to the Administration and the war. These vermin, who infest all republics, boastful enough at home, no sooner found themselves in sight of the enemy than they discovered that the militia of the United States could not be constitutionally marched into a foreign country! This pleasant doctrine to the faint hearted, soon found almost universal favor. (*Memoirs of Lieut.-General Scott, LL.D.* New York: Sheldon & Company, Publishers, 1864, 63.)

Teaching points: Planning, logistics, organizational leadership, morale.

Notes

1. Anonymous, undated letter held in the Cherry Hill Manuscript Collection. When Andrew Jackson came to office, he began a widespread replacement of Federalists holding public office. Solomon van Rensselaer was then the postmaster at Albany and subject to losing his living. The anonymous writer prepared this letter to be sent to Jackson in an attempt to persuade the president to keep van Rensselaer in his position. Jackson was aware of van Rensselaer's many wounds suffered for his country and allowed him to retain his job.

2. Stephen van Rensselaer to Dearborn, 17 September 1812, found in Catherine V.R. Bonney, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings* (Albany, New York: J. Munsell, 1875), 233-34.

3. Stephen van Rensselaer to Tompkins, 17 September 1812, found in Catherine V.R. Bonney, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings* (Albany, New York: J. Munsell, 1875), 236.

4. Stephen van Rensselaer to Tompkins.

Chapter 4

1813 Campaign

Campaign Overview

The Battle of Queenston Heights in October 1812 was catastrophic for the American war effort. The victorious British paroled hundreds of New York militiamen allowing them to return to their homes. Other hundreds, soldiers in the regular army, sailed eastward into captivity. Some of these poor souls ended up at the infamous Dartmoor Prison in England, languishing there for years. Dozens more never returned home, but were left in shallow graves on both sides of the Niagara River. Settlers along the river experienced an uneasy peace over the winter. Spring 1813 brought with it new violence that would not end until virtually every dwelling, barn, and business on the New York side of the river was burned and much of the populace fleeing in the December snows in search of protection.

President James Madison's strategy was to capture the cities of Montreal and Quebec in order to persuade Britain to make trade concessions, to cease arming the natives on the American frontier, and to stop impressing American sailors. How, then, did the ruinous conflict drift westward to the Niagara region?

Madison and his new Secretary of War, John Armstrong, proposed that their commanders, General Henry Dearborn and Commodore Isaac Chauncey, seize the major British naval base at Kingston. This would lead directly to the destruction of the British squadron on Lake Ontario. The two commanders could then readily seize the supply base at York and then Fort George. With Lake Ontario in American hands, the two commanders could move against Montreal.

Dearborn and Chauncey decided that Kingston was too strongly held to be successfully attacked. Therefore, they sent a counterproposal. The American effort would first be directed at York to destroy the shipyard and to seize supplies. Then, American forces would capture Fort George and open the Niagara River. With these preliminaries accomplished, Dearborn and Chauncey would attack

Kingston. Armstrong reluctantly agreed; after so many defeats the Madison administration needed to deliver a quick victory to the public.

The raid on York was successful, but at the cost of a brave and competent leader, Brigadier General Zebulon Pike. Despite this tragic loss, and the loss of hundreds of soldiers killed and wounded, Chauncey and Dearborn began preparations to attack Fort George near the northern end of the Niagara River.

The Battle for Fort George

All during May, Chauncey's squadron shuttled between Sackett's Harbor and Four Mile Creek east of Fort Niagara delivering soldiers and supplies. Dearborn chose a charismatic, brilliant and ambitious officer, Colonel Winfield Scott, to plan the operation against Fort George. Scott understood that his mission was not merely to capture the earth and timber fort, but to destroy the British force garrisoning the post. To this end, he ordered that the major landing take place between the village of Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) and Two Mile Creek. He also directed that a regiment of dragoons cross the Niagara River a few miles south of Fort George, to cut the road leading to Queenston. Scott himself would lead the advance guard of the main attack, a body of 800 hand-picked officers and men. Three brigades, about 3000 soldiers, would follow in quick succession.

Commodore Chauncey enlisted the aid of another gifted officer, Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry. Perry would go on to lead the US Navy to a resounding victory at the Battle of Lake Erie in September. However, in May, the day before the invasion, Perry cruised the shore opposite the landing beach positioning buoys to mark the location for American gunboats that would engage the enemy's artillery.

The British commander, Brigadier General John Vincent, was responsible for defense of the Niagara Peninsula. He expected that Dearborn would follow up the raid on York with an attack on Fort George. However, Vincent did not know whether the Americans would attack across the Niagara, as they had at Queenston, or if they would make an amphibious assault on the shores of Lake Ontario.

With his small force of regulars and militiamen, Vincent prepared for both eventualities. He divided his slender command into three groups. One garrisoned Fort George and the other two were located on each flank, watching the river line and the lake shore.

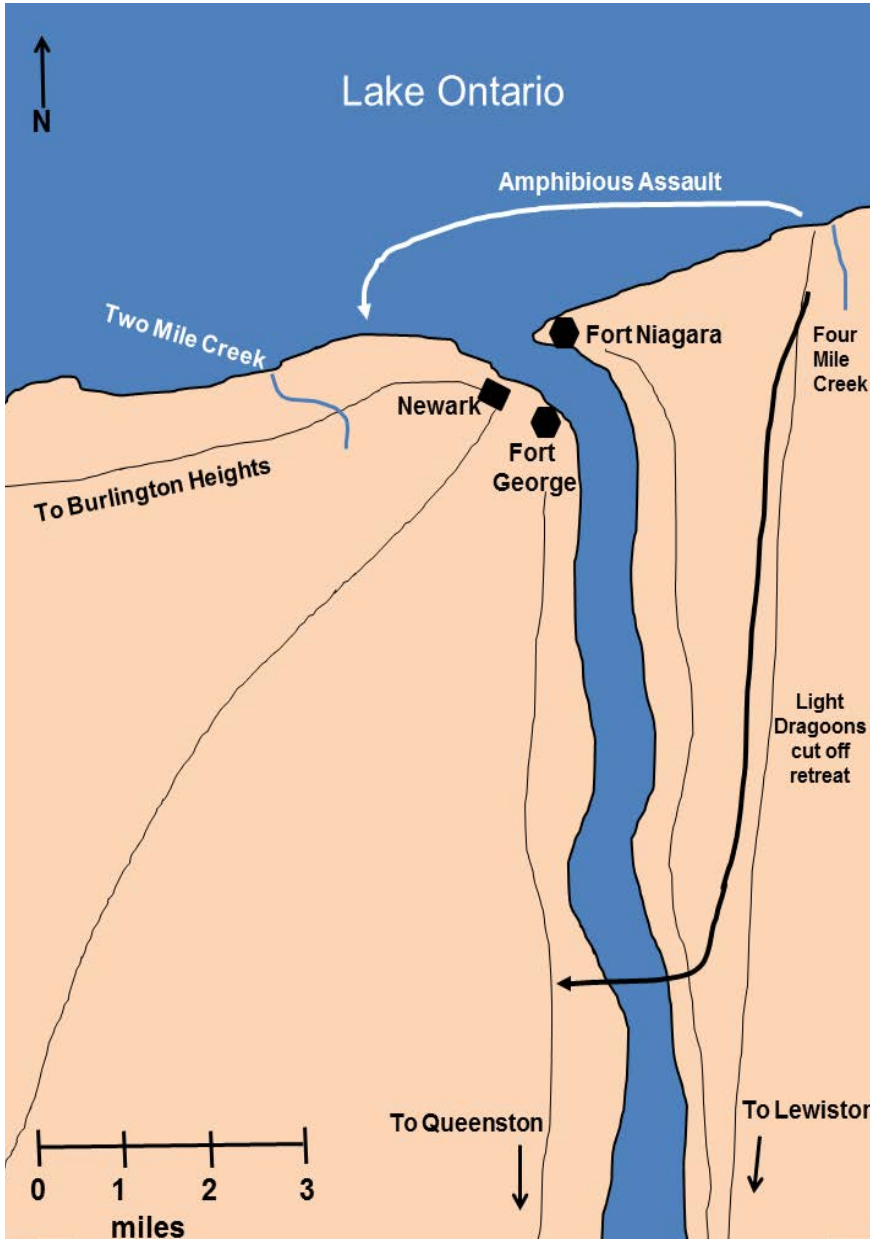

Figure 17. Scott's Plan.

On 25 May, a fierce cannonade commenced between Fort George and Fort Niagara and a number of subsidiary batteries along the river. The Americans fired hot shot that set all the British barracks on fire. Vincent knew that attack was imminent. After midnight on 27 May, the Americans started filling more than 130 boats, scows, and bateaux. Sixteen of Chauncey's larger vessels towed the smaller craft into Lake Ontario and by dawn the American invasion force was about a mile off of the beach between Two-Mile Creek and the lighthouse west of Newark. The Americans detached themselves from their tow vessels and lined up, the boats of the advance guard in front followed by three brigades and a reserve in compact lines, one behind the other.

Vincent was near the lighthouse when he and his staff saw the vast invasion fleet emerge from the fog. American schooners moved inshore to take up positions carefully marked by Perry. The Americans opened a heavy fire, weakly returned by a few British guns. Scott and his advance guard made a run for the beach as Vincent deployed a few hundred regulars and militia to oppose them.

A desperate struggle at the landing site ensued. The beach itself was a very narrow strip of sand and stone bordered by a steep embankment varying from six to fifteen feet in height. A number of British were posted atop the bank and fired directly into the boats as they approached the shore. Scott and his men piled out of the assault craft and clambered up the slopes. Scott himself, ever in the lead, narrowly dodged a bayonet thrust, lost his footing, and toppled unceremoniously backward onto the beach. Dearborn, watching from a nearby ship, exclaimed that Scott was killed. Scott picked himself up and started once again up the clay and sand embankment. Scott's men drove off the defenders and started forming up on line as British reinforcements arrived. It was now the British turn to enjoy some success as they drove the Americans below the brow of the bank. Both sides opened up a heavy storm of musket fire from a very short range. While this action was unfolding, Brigadier General John Boyd's Brigade landed and started up the cliff, the men hopelessly mixed in with the soldiers of the advance guard. Eventually numbers told and the British left nearly two hundred dead and seriously wounded along a narrow line parallel to the bank.

The British withdrew to the open ground outside of the village and prepared themselves for the onslaught they knew would follow. Several British artillery pieces joined them and opened fire on the Americans still sorting themselves out at the landing site. Scott sent his riflemen into the woods bordering the open ground. After nearly twenty minutes, Scott and Boyd successfully separated their soldiers, formed them into columns, and started their advance. The British guns, served largely by volunteer infantrymen, fired over the heads of the attacking Americans and soon the British withdrew closer to their fort.

Meanwhile, British scouts reported to General Vincent that a body of Americans was moving south from Fort Niagara toward Youngstown. These were Colonel James Burn's dismounted dragoons, fighting that day as infantry. Vincent surmised that these enemy soldiers would cross the river and surround Fort George, cutting off a withdrawal. Unable to stop the invaders at the shore or on the open ground outside the village, Vincent decided to save his outnumbered force. This meant abandoning Fort George. Vincent gave orders to spike the guns and to blow up the ammunition magazines in the fort and for his men to form up and withdraw south toward Queenston. However, Vincent did not intend to occupy Queenston Heights. Instead, he ordered his men to pick up a trail westward toward Burlington Heights. Vincent also sent orders to Fort Erie and to every battery along the Niagara River to abandon their positions and join his main force.

Scott gathered up two companies from his advance guard and raced to Fort George on a captured horse as the British pulled back. He arrived at the fort just as one of the magazines blew up. A falling timber then knocked Scott from his horse and he broke his collarbone in the tumble. Unfazed, Scott entered the fort with the intention of capturing the British flag still fluttering above. The two company commanders entered the fort behind him and immediately cut the fuses leading to the remaining magazines. Scott noted that the halyards supporting the flag had been shot away. Despite his injury, Scott found an ax, chopped down the flagpole, and took possession of the British flag. The fort itself was a burned shambles. The cannonading from the guns of Fort Niagara had been devastating.

Scott finally returned to the important business. He gathered his advance guard together, and without orders, launched a vigorous pursuit of the retreating British. The American victory would be largely diminished if Vincent was allowed to withdraw with his forces intact. Scott picked up the line of British retreat and urged his men onward. Colonel Burn was unable, however, to cross his dragoons in time to cut off Vincent's column. Burn and Scott joined forces and moved toward Queenston, following a trail of abandoned equipment.

General Dearborn, too ill to actively command on shore, turned over tactical command to Major General Morgan Lewis. Lewis was a political general, largely inexperienced in military matters. However, he was a former governor of New York, a friend of James Madison, and brother-in-law to the secretary of war. Lewis was soon to make a fateful decision that crippled the 1813 campaign.

General Lewis was busy bringing the rest of the American force together around Newark and Fort George. When he learned that Scott was following Vincent, he sent orders for Scott to break off the pursuit and return to Fort George. Lewis believed that the men were too tired to continue and feared Vincent might turn on the impetuous Scott and destroy the weak American column. Scott was not about to let Vincent escape, and he ignored repeated messages to stop. Finally, General Boyd galloped up to Scott and gave him an unequivocal order to return to the American camp. Scott had pushed his luck too far and now had no choice but to comply. Lewis's order, based upon a weak understanding of the situation and his own cautious nature, deprived the Americans of an otherwise well-earned victory. The 1813 campaign would grind on with heavy casualties on all sides as the British recovered their balance and handed two stunning defeats to the invaders.

Governor General Sir George Prevost was at Kingston when news arrived that the American squadron had sailed westward. He and his naval commander, Commodore Sir James Yeo, hatched a plan to raid and destroy Sackett's Harbor, leaving the American squadron without a base upon its return. Prevost and Yeo understood that they could not defend Upper Canada if the Americans gained control of Lake Ontario. The possibility of forestalling that eventuality persuaded Prevost to accept heavy risk.

On 29 May, Prevost and Yeo landed about 900 soldiers west of the American base. The British advanced relentlessly and the Americans resisted with fierce determination. The British reached the very outskirts of the naval yard when Prevost reluctantly decided to break off the attack. He ordered his men back into their boats and returned them to Kingston. When Chauncey learned how close he had come to losing his base, he returned to Sackett's Harbor with most of the squadron. Never again would he risk his fleet in supporting an army operation. With the navy gone, Dearborn was on his own in exploiting his victory at Fort George.

Dearborn belatedly decided to attack Vincent, who had moved his division to a position atop Burlington Heights. He sent two brigades, commanded by Brigadier Generals John Chandler and William Winder, to conduct the attack. By the evening of 5 June, about 3000 American troops were camped at two locations about three miles away from Vincent. Eight hundred of the Americans were guarding supply boats along the lake shore, the rest were in a large meadow west of Stoney Creek.

The Battle of Stoney Creek

As he was senior to Winder, Chandler exercised overall command of the American force. He selected a strong position for his command. The left of the American camp was protected by the escarpment and the right was anchored on a swamp. Chandler ordered the advance guard, which had fought most of the day, to secure the American camp. He ordered a company of riflemen to guard the road leading to the American camp from Burlington Heights. These well-trained, experienced warriors were entirely unfamiliar with guard duty. Their commander posted a few sentinels and the rest of his men fell asleep in a church. Chandler positioned an artillery company with four guns along the road that split the camp. However, Chandler allowed each regimental commander to establish camp as he saw fit. One regiment, the 25th Infantry, positioned itself in the meadow and started campfires for the cooks to prepare breakfast. The bulk of the American force was scattered along an embankment that ran perpendicular to the road, and well behind the 25th Infantry.

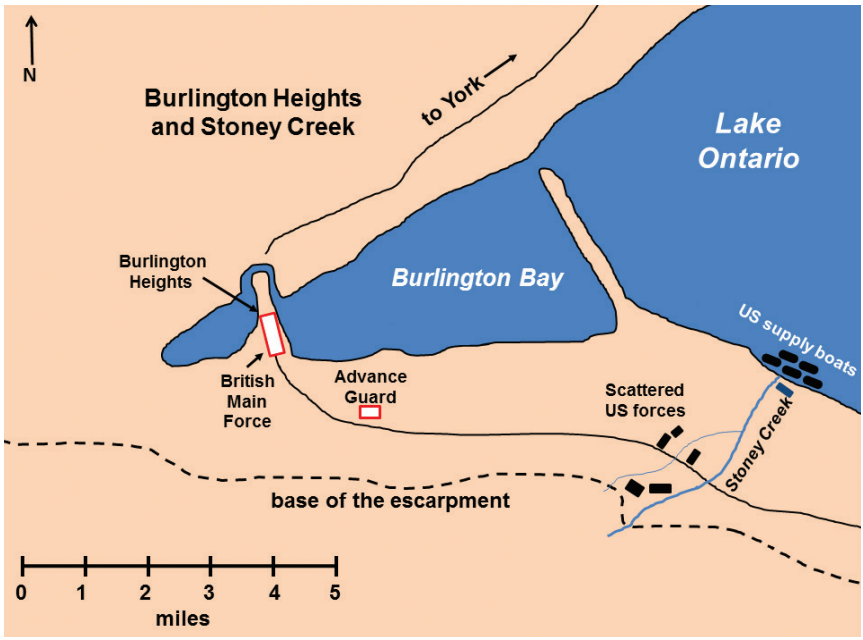

Figure 18. Burlington Heights to Stoney Creek.

General Vincent knew he was in a dangerous position. The Americans heavily outnumbered his division and were expected to attack the next day. Vincent could accept a risky battle, or he could retreat to York. However, if Burlington Heights fell into American hands, then the supply line to the British at Detroit would be cut. One of Vincent's subordinates, the exceptionally competent Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey, had seen the unorganized layout of the American camp. He suggested a third course of action – attack. Night attacks are notoriously risky, but all of Vincent's choices were uncertain.

Vincent selected 800 soldiers for the attack. The British would approach the American camp stealthily. The soldiers removed the flints from their muskets to ensure that no weapon accidentally discharged. The British silently bayoneted three sentinels and surrounded the church, capturing the sleeping company of American riflemen. As the British arrived at their objective and saw the cooking fires burning, some soldiers assumed that they had caught the Americans sleeping. Raising a cheer, the British leveled their bayonets and charged toward the fires. Except for a few unfortunate cooks,

however, the Americans were quite safe at the edge of the embankment, fully clothed with weapons ready and hidden in the darkness.

Regimental commanders ordered their men to fire into the British attackers who were silhouetted against the fires. The British, caught in the open meadow, replaced flints as quickly as they could.

In the chaos, the attackers fell by the score, yet British courage and determination won the day. Major Charles Plenderleath found himself a few dozen yards in front of the American guns. He gathered the men around him, fewer than thirty in number, and charged directly into the American cannon. The American artillerists had stacked their muskets behind them and were defenseless against the fierce bayonet charge. In a minute, the guns fell into British hands. Fate then intervened with a decidedly British bias. Chandler, unaware that his artillery had changed hands, arrived to see why the gunners had stopped firing. Plenderleath's men took him prisoner. Moments later, Winder and his staff rode up to the artillery, and he fell captive as well. Unaware that both of their generals were captured, the Americans awaited orders that never came. The British slipped away back to Burlington Heights, believing that their attack had failed.

As dawn broke, the Americans discovered their generals had been captured. Command devolved upon Colonel James Burn, an unfortunate circumstance. Burn was personally brave, but lacked confidence in his ability to lead an army. Despite the strong arguments by some to continue on to Burlington Heights, Burn decided to retreat behind Forty Mile Creek and to seek guidance from Dearborn at Fort George. Dearborn sent General Lewis to take command at Forty Mile Creek. Now the Americans felt the full impact of Chauncey's decision to sail back to Sackett's Harbor. Commodore James Yeo appeared with a small squadron and his presence terrified Dearborn. The anxious American commander expected Yeo to land a force to retake Fort George while the bulk of the Americans were two-day's march away. Dearborn immediately recalled Lewis. Yeo had no soldiers to land, but his sailors captured twenty boatloads of supplies abandoned along the lake shore. With the American army back where it started from, Dearborn pondered how to re-ignite his faltering campaign.

The Battle for Beaver Dams

With the invaders largely concentrated at Fort George, Vincent moved his forces closer to hem them in. His division was joined by a large number of native warriors and militiamen. One of Vincent's subordinates was Lieutenant James FitzGibbon who commanded about fifty soldiers of the 49th Regiment of Foot and a number of warriors from the Grand River settlement. FitzGibbon was a specialist in unconventional warfare. His small band roamed the Niagara Peninsula keeping American patrols and foragers at bay. FitzGibbon's guerillas were countered by an American unconventional unit. Doctor Cyrenius Chapin of Buffalo raised his own company of mounted raiders, called the Forty Thieves by the British. These two small units mixed it up frequently along the Niagara, but their decisive encounter occurred in late June.

Dearborn hoped to seize the initiative he had surrendered after the Battle of Stoney Creek. He ordered Lieutenant Colonel Charles Boerstler of the 14th Infantry to capture FitzGibbon's headquarters at the De Cou House atop the escarpment in Thorold Township. Twilight on June 23d, Boerstler with about 600 men departed Fort George to conduct their raid. Boerstler's column rested at Queenston and on the morning of the 24th marched off toward their objective. Canadian folklore maintains that heroine Laura Secord learned of the impending American raid and warned FitzGibbon.

The Americans were on the Mountain Road, about two miles away from the small settlement at Beaver Dams when they were ambushed. There were woods on three sides and cultivated fields and a farm house on the south side of the road. The locals called the forested area the Beechwoods. At around 0830, about 450 native warriors appeared behind the column. Boerstler's rear guard, a company of the 23d Infantry, formed line facing the enemy and a small detachment of American dragoons charged. However, a sharp volley from the natives drove back the horsemen, some of whom rode through their infantry support, disrupting them.

The battle lasted nearly three hours. Initially, American artillery fire was too high, cutting down the upper limbs of the trees. The Americans brought their wounded off the firing line and placed them in wagons so as not to hurt the morale of the other soldiers. The

natives seemed to be in two parties, in front of and to the rear of the Americans. American infantry fired controlled volleys and ammunition was running low. Boerstler himself was wounded twice early in the fighting. Nonetheless, he ordered several bayonet charges to drive off the Indians, who fell back initially, but re-engaged as soon as the Americans returned to their lines.

The battle continued for two long hours when Boerstler decided to regroup south of the Mountain Road and then advance northward, descend the escarpment, and return to Fort George by this more direct route. He had given up all hope of continuing on with the raid. At this moment, FitzGibbon arrived under a white flag proposing that Boerstler surrender as he was outnumbered and FitzGibbon could not restrain the natives from a potential massacre should fighting continue. FitzGibbon was clearly bluffing, as there were few British regulars present. Initially refusing to surrender, Boerstler eventually became convinced of his desperate situation with the arrival of a party of British dragoons. Boerstler surrendered 462 men including dozens of wounded.

The capitulation negotiated by Boerstler and FitzGibbon stated that the American officers would be paroled. However, the natives immediately began taking valuables and clothing from the captives until the British intervened. When FitzGibbon realized that his nemesis, Cyrenius Chapin, was among the captives, he reneged on the terms of the surrender. The British sent Chapin and his men under guard across Lake Ontario in two small boats en route to captivity. Chapin and his men overpowered their guards, took control of the boats, and escaped to Fort Niagara and freedom. Chapin would play a key role in the defense of Buffalo the following December.

Dearborn's time in command was over. His lack of success persuaded the secretary of war to send Dearborn to a quiet command in New York City and replace him with Major General James Wilkinson. The American army withdrew to Fort George where illness ravaged its ranks. The British kept the erstwhile invaders penned up for the remainder of the summer and fall. Finally, Wilkinson arrived. He decided to move the campaign away from the Niagara Peninsula and advance on Montreal. He ordered the hundreds of regulars at Fort George to move to Sackett's Harbor preparatory for a November campaign. The commander at Fort George, militia Brigadier Gen-

eral George McClure, abandoned Fort George and burned the unoffending village of Newark as he departed. With American regulars gone, the new British commander, Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond, saw an unparalleled opportunity to punish the Americans along the Niagara River. December would witness widespread death and devastation for military and civilians alike.

On the evening of 18 December 1813, A British force of about 560 regulars landed south of Youngstown. This body of regulars attacked the picket at Youngstown, bayoneting or capturing the entire guard. The British then quietly assaulted Fort Niagara, pouring through an unlocked gate, and killed or captured the garrison of more than 400. Over the next few days, British raiders, aided by native warriors, attacked every village along the Niagara River, burning nearly every structure and forcing the civilian population to seek shelter miles inland.

Suggested Stands

Introduction

The 1813 Campaign on the Niagara started with the capture of Fort George on 27 May 1813. The failure to destroy General Vincent's division during the battle resulted in two failed attempts by General Dearborn to exploit his easy victory at the fort. Both Fort George and the battlefield at Stoney Creek are sufficiently maintained and easily accessible for a staff ride of one day. The battlefield at Beaver Dams, however, is drastically changed from its appearance in 1813. The area is urbanized and the 1813 road network has been obliterated. Over the years, new waterways connected with the Welland Canal were established that further altered the topography to a nearly unrecognizable state. Therefore, the stands of this campaign are limited to the landing beach, Fort George itself, and two stands at the small Stoney Creek battlefield. A final stand, Fort Niagara, is included because the capture of Fort Niagara occurred in 1813. However, a visit to Fort Niagara can be a stand-alone event; the fort has a long military history that extends back to the colonial wars that is aptly captured in displays at the fort. The picturesque and touristy village of Niagara-on-the-Lake, while much changed from 1813, is also worthy of a visit.

Stand 1

The Landing Beach

Directions: Cross into Canada at either the Peace Bridge in Buffalo or the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge south of Lewiston. This bridge is accessible easily from either I-190 or the Robert Moses Parkway. After leaving customs, pick up the Niagara Parkway heading north. The Niagara Parkway skirts Queenston Heights and the village of Queenston. At Fort George National Historic Park, the Niagara Parkway becomes Queens Parade and leads into the village of Niagara-on-the-Lake where it becomes Queen Street. Go through the village until you reach Lake Ontario. Along the way, you will pass an entrance to the ruins of Fort Mississauga. If you have time, this is worthy of a stop. There is a golf course to the right of the route. When the road reaches the lake, you will see a battlefield marker. This is the approximate eastern border of the landing area. Continue westward along the lake shore. This is the 1813 landing area. You can park at Ryerson Park. From here, walk to the cliffs overlooking the lake. If you overshoot, you will pass over Two Mile Creek. This creek marked the western edge of the landing beach. Access to the beach from this point is problematic.

Orientation: The landing beach was no more than one mile wide. Observers recalled that the embankment was anywhere from six to twenty feet above the very narrow beach. One observer, Captain Isaac Roach of the 23rd Infantry, recalled that the cliff was composed of sandy soil. The stony beach was probably overcrowded with as many as 135 landing boats. Captain Ephraim Shaler of the 25th Infantry remembered that each boat carried about sixteen soldiers.

The land immediately south of the landing beach was generally flat, cut by a few shallow ravines or gullies. It was also very lightly wooded, unlike the more densely wooded area today. The British defenders could remain in the ravines and escape the worst of the incoming naval gunfire, but they would have to come out of cover in order to fight.

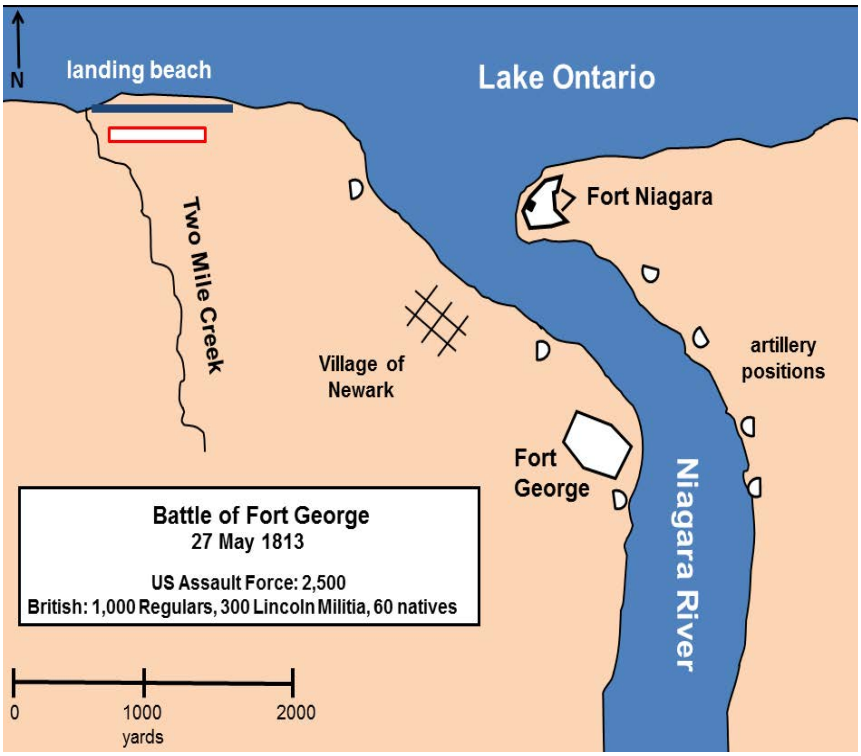

Figure 19. Fort George Battlefield.

Situation: Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Myers commanded the left wing of Brigadier General John Vincent's division at Fort George. Myers had a total of six companies of infantry, perhaps 350 men, positioned in a ravine about 200 yards from the landing beach. As the heavy fog lifted, Myers and his men saw scores of boats pulling for shore. The first line of boats, Winfield Scott's advance guard, was accompanied by schooners on each flank. These vessels moved to buoys that Oliver Hazard Perry had positioned the previous day as close as possible to the shore. The naval vessels anchored and opened up a heavy cannonade of the landing area, their shot passing over the ravine covering Myers's soldiers.

The advance guard was composed of about 800 soldiers, handpicked by Scott. On the right (west) was a battalion of the Rifle Regiment commanded by their renowned leader, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Forsyth. Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely commanded the left (east). His command consisted of three companies

of infantry and two companies of artillerists fighting as infantry. On the extreme left, Captain Jacob Hindman and a small body of artillerists landed with a three-pounder gun. Only a few hundred yards behind the advance guard, Brigadier General John P. Boyd's Brigade rowed toward shore. His brigade consisted of about 1800 men from the 6th, 15th, and 16th Infantry Regiments and two companies of Lieutenant Colonel Francis McClure's rifle volunteers.

After the boats of the advance guard landed, the officers formed their men and began ascending the embankment. Meyers responded by leading his defenders out of the cover of the ravine and attacking with bayonets lowered. Scott, dodging a bayonet thrust, fell backward down the embankment. The American assault was stopped and forced rearward onto the shore. Many of the British stood on the lip of the embankment, firing directly into the boats of Boyd's Brigade. Scott and his officers, though, got their men moving again and pushed the British back from the edge of the cliff. Meyers received three wounds in this charge. Nonetheless, he reformed his men and moved forward again. This time, the Americans stayed just under the lip of the embankment, and poured a heavy fire into the oncoming attackers. The naval gunners had to shift their fire to the flanks for fear of hitting their own men.

The next twenty minutes saw a confusing and deadly fire fight. Scott's orders were to move 300 yards inland to allow space between his and Boyd's troops. However, the men of the second wave approached the shore much too fast. Boyd's soldiers landed and scrambled up the cliff, thoroughly intermixing with Scott's men. The mass of Americans formed atop the embankment, as close as twenty yards from the defenders. About 300 men of the 8th Regiment of Foot appeared and Meyers somehow managed to throw them into his firing line. Outnumbered nearly four to one and with nearly every officer killed or wounded, the British withdrew to the ravine. Nearly 400 men were killed or wounded in a narrow band along the beach and atop the embankment. Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey took command from the desperately wounded Meyers. Harvey withdrew rearward toward the open area between Newark and Fort George. Vincent sent several companies of the 49th Foot and a few six-pounder guns to reinforce Harvey who established a thin line and awaited the American onslaught.

Meanwhile, over the next twenty minutes, Scott and Boyd disentangled their respective commands as the third wave, Brigadier General William Winder's Brigade, began its landing.

Vignette 1: Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely recalled the Advance Guard approaching the shore:

> Orders were given for the light troops to make for the shore. Our boats formed a line and pulled away for the shore. The two schooners covered our landing. The enemy about 1500 strong lay in waiting in a ravine forty yards from shore. They reserved their fire until our boats were within one hundred and fifty yards when they opened a heavy and galling fire. The fire was returned from our boats, the men at the oars quit rowing and took to their muskets. All appeared to be in confusion, some of our boats swung around broadside to the shore, but with the exertions of the officers we soon got under way again. (John C. Fredriksen, editor. "Chronicle of Valor: The Journal of a Pennsylvania Officer in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 67, [July 1984]:261-62.)

Vignette 2: In his memoirs written many years afterwards, Winfield Scott recalled the event. He wrote of the landing in the third person:

> The beach was narrow and the bank precipitous—from seven to eleven feet high, affording generally, but slight foothold to climbers. The first attempt at ascent was repulsed by the bayonet, and Scott, among others, tumbled backward. Major General Dearborn, a fine old soldier, saw, from the fleet, the fall, and honored the supposed loss of the chief of his staff with a tear. At the second attempt the bank was scaled—with a loss of every fifth man killed or wounded; the line of battle was reformed, and a furious charge made that drove more than twice the number of the enemy out of sight. (Winfield Scott, *Memoirs of Lieut. General Scott, LL.D.* New York: Sheldon & Company, Publishers, 1864, 88-89.)

Vignette 3: Surgeon's Mate William Beaumont, who later achieved fame for his observations of the working of the human stomach, was with the 6th Infantry in Boyd's Brigade:

…at ½ past 11 a.m. we effected a landing immediately under a most tremendous fire of the enemy, at their chosen & most possible advantageous situation being concealed in a hallow behind an elevation of the banks, directly where our boats struck the shore & commencing an incessant fire, as soon as our boats came within reach of their shott; could not seemingly miss their aim in shooting us all dead in the boats before we could gain the shore; but our men commencing firing at the same time; pressed for the shore with undaunted fury with the loss of very few indeed. (William Beaumont to Samuel Beaumont, 1 June 1813 in the William and Samuel Beaumont Papers, Military History Institute.)

Vignette 4: Colonel Cromwell Pearce with the First Brigade wrote of the landing:

The bank was from six to ten feet high, and the ground cleared and open about 12 yards from the river, [clearly Pearce means the lake] beyond which space it was covered brush and underwood. Here the enemy lay concealed. Colonel Scott and his command had not yet reached the shore, when a most severe fire of musketry was opened on them. They landed, however, formed, and advanced; when they were immediately charged by the enemy down the bank and driven to the water's edge. At this moment the First Brigade landed under a heavy fire. Colonel Scott's corps covering themselves under the bank, continued a severe fire, the enemy secreting themselves behind stumps and underwood. Every nerve was now strained in rowing all boats to the shore. Some of the boats of the First Brigade had reached the shore, when the enemy again lined the bank, and from their right poured into the boats several heavy discharges of musketry, which was very fatal on the 16th Regiment, it occupying the extreme left. On this occasion we were greeted with shells of a new construction, called sphericals, containing from 100 to 150 musket balls, which wounded many of the soldiers and injured several of the boats. (John C. Fredriksen, editor, "'A Poor but Honest Sodger,'" Colonel Cromwell Pearce of the 16th U.S. Infantry, and the War of 1812, *Pennsylvania History* 52, (July 1985): 141.) This was one of the first occasions Americans experienced spherical case, invented by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Shrapnel of the Royal Artillery.

Vignette 5: Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely recalled two incidents from the battle:

> I had two riflemen selected to keep close alongside of me during the action, the one named Shoops and the other Devor. They were first-rate marksmen. Devor in the confusion of landing got lost from me, I did not see him until after the action, but Shoops kept close to me nor did he fire until he asked permission. This man possessed the most cool and determined bravery that I have ever seen. When some of our men were firing into the air at an angle of forty-five degrees, others in their confusion did not ram the cartridge half way home, dropped their ramrods on the ground and indeed some rendered their muskets useless during the fight by firing away their rammers, Shoops remained cool and collected, he lowered his rifle and took his aim as deliberately as if he had been shooting at a mark. ...My other soldier Devor committed a most shocking outrage on a wounded soldier. The circumstance was communicated to me in the evening by Sergeant Pratt as follows: 'A poor fellow was wounded in the main artery of the thigh. He was sitting on the ground holding his wound with both hands, the blood shooting out at jerks as thick as a finger; I was looking at him when Devor came up, he cocked his rifle, and blew out his brains.' This was confirmed by two or three other men; I sent for Devor the next morning and told him what I had heard and asked him if it was true. He appeared to be embarrassed and muttered that the fellow was reaching for his gun and he thought he was going to shoot some of the men. I told him that that was murder & that I had a good mind to send him to the Provost Guard and prefer charges against him. He deserted the next morning and was never heard of. (John C. Fredriksen, ed. "Chronicle of Valor: The Journal of a Pennsylvania Officer in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 67, [July 1984]: 262-63.)

Teaching Points: Training and rehearsal, joint operations, leadership, tactical surprise, war crimes.

Stand 2

Fort George

Directions: Return from the shore the way you came, back down Queen Street and the Queens Parade. Enter the grounds at Fort George. There is ample parking. This is a good time to enter the Visitor Center for an orientation and purchase tickets to enter the fort. The gift shop has an extensive library of scholarly and popular books by Canadian and American authors.

Orientation: The route that the Americans took toward Fort George was across a generally open field to the south of Newark. This area is now urban terrain. The cemetery at the eastern end of Newark marked the edge of the village in 1813. Today the cemetery around Saint Mark's Church is larger, but the vestiges of the American camp still remain. After the battle, Dearborn positioned most of his troops north of the fort. The men dug a shallow ditch around their camp and a small section of this ditch is readily discernible in the old part of the cemetery. American cooks took livestock a short way outside of the lines for butchering. They cut the meat atop a large horizontal grave stone and the deep grooves caused by their cleavers are clearly visible. The cemetery is accessible by following Prideaux Street out of the Fort. The cemetery is on the right.

Fort George itself is restored to its condition at the time of the battle. The north-most bastion faces Fort Niagara about 1100 yards away across the river. The main building of Fort Niagara, the French Castle, as well as the two stone redoubts are clearly visible. In 1813, the Americans removed the roofs of the castle and redoubts to allow better positioning of the guns which were placed on the sturdy upper floors of all three stone structures. The shorelines on both sides of the river are currently lined with docking for pleasure craft. In 1813, both sides had wharfs at which schooners and bateaux tied up.

Situation 1: The fighting continued between the beach and Fort George for about an hour. Scott pushed Forsyth's riflemen into the woods skirting the open area where Harvey was attempting to form a solid defense. The riflemen fired at reinforcements moving to join Harvey. Scott and Boyd formed their respective commands into at-

tack columns and moved on the British. Harvey fought a skillful withdrawal to avoid being outflanked by the American riflemen. His artillery kept up a brisk fire to cover the rearward movement of the infantry.

General Vincent was well aware that his goal was to keep his force intact and not risk it in an undefendable wooden palisaded fort. He received reports that American troops were forming near Youngstown on the other side of the river with the apparent intention of crossing south of Fort George to cut the road to Queenston. Timing was critical. Vincent issued orders to form up in column and to march quickly toward Queenston. He sent orders to every grouping of troops along the entire thirty-seven miles of river to abandon their positions and to rally at Burlington Heights. The British were in a race to escape the trap at Fort George.

Vignette: Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely was with Scott during the move to Fort George:

> The light troops were ordered to pursue the enemy; their track was easily followed, the ground was covered with muskets, knapsacks, blankets and cartridge boxes, &c, &c. When we got through the woods on to the plains of New Arke, [Newark] we saw the enemy forming on the back of the town. I suggested to Col. Scott to fall back until we could gain the woods, take a circuitous route under the cover of woods, and gain the rear of the enemy while the main army would come up in their front, thus cutting off their retreat they would surrender. Scott agreed to this and our column was to the right when the enemy opened a battery of four six pounders upon us. Scott ordered the column to wheel to the left and march at quick time direct for the battery. They continued a brisk fire until we approached within two hundred yards, when they retreated in great confusion. Every shot passed over our heads and not a shot took effect, however several men were killed and wounded in the main army three quarters of a mile in our rear. (John C. Fredriksen, ed. "Chronicle of Valor: The Journal of a Pennsylvania Officer in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 67, [July 1984]: 263-64.)

Situation 2: Both the British and Americans had built several

gun batteries along the river line, positioned to gain flanking fire into their respective targets, the two forts. During the fierce cannonading earlier in the morning, the Americans clearly got the upper hand. Hot shot fired from Fort Niagara and its subsidiary batteries tore into the British batteries as well as the timber buildings inside Fort George. In several instances, American artillery fire drove off the British gunners who sought shelter nearby. By mid-morning, Vincent ordered his gunners outside of the fort for their safety.

Scott led his advance guard toward the fort. Scott noted that the British had abandoned the fort, yet he personally continued to the fort, galloping ahead of the two companies of artillerists accompanying him.

Vignette 1: Winfield Scott wrote of his activities at the fort:

> The enemy immediately retreated. We pursued in column. 200 yds, farther & I found myself opposite the fort (which was now between me and the river). Here I detached [Jacob] Hindman's and [Thomas] Stockton's companies (at the head of the column) & marched with them to take the Fort (which I saw the British were abandoning). The army at this time was far in the rear & no Genl. yet up. Having taken 2 men who were flying from the Fort I was informed the remaining were about firing the magazine, & spiking the cannon. I therefore quickened pace to prevent them. Being on horseback I rode far ahead on my detacht.; near to the fort, I took five other prisoners when a magazine blew up with a tremendous explosion. Genl. Boyd was now near me, & fell back telling me not to advance, & indeed my prisoners assured me that 3 other magazines were about to explode. I went forwd. singly & entered the fort 60 paces ahead of any American (my prisoners with me) & had the satisfaction to find the colours yet flying.
>
> The British were so much hurried they left their work unfinished. The three remaining magazines were saved; three pieces of cannon remained unspiked; & the flag staff not quite cut down, by the retreating enemy. The halliards being cut away, by our shot from the opposite shore & an axe laying by, I applied myself to work. Genl. [Moses] Porter now came up; also Genl. Boyd. ... Porter gave a stroke or two with a second axe & I had the honour to take the colours of Fort George. (Scott to

Major Charles K. Gardner, 4 June 1813 in the Gardner Papers, New York State Library.)

Vignette 2: Captain Isaac Roach recalled:

> When we took possession of Fort George, I had evidence enough of the effect of heated shot and shells. Every building had been burnt, and even the fire engine entirely destroyed; indeed, everything seemed destroyed or scattered in fragments. Every few yards was the mark of a shell, and the ploughing up of our heavy shot. (Mary Roach Archer, ed. "Journal of Major Isaac Roach," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* XVII, No. 2, [1893]:146.)

Situation 3: Winfield Scott pursued Vincent's retreating column on the road toward Queenston until he was ordered to return to Fort George. To this day, there is disagreement over who ordered Scott to break off the pursuit. Dearborn and Lewis could hardly stand one another. Dearborn knew that Secretary of War John Armstrong coveted field command of the army and Lewis was his brother-in-law. Dearborn was very ill and remained aboard ship and he directed Lewis to take command onshore. As the army became aware of the mistake in recalling Scott, both Dearborn and Lewis blamed one another for that fateful decision.

Vignette 1: A week after the battle, Winfield Scott wrote to a friend:

> I lost not a moment—having given Hindman orders, I galloped forward on Col. Myer's horse (whom I had taken & paroled in action) to join the column which, during the 15 minutes I had been absent, had pursued the retreating enemy who fled in every direction. I continued the pursuit 5 miles up the river—[Lieutenant Colonel James] Miller alone (with the 6th) was with me. The Generals & the army, were yet in the village below me. I recd. severl. orders in these five miles to halt; but as these did not come thro' the proper channels I pursued my march. In sight of Queenstown, however, I got an order from Maj. Genl. Lewis to halt & a reprimand for having gone so far. It is now universally acknowledged, that if we had been permitted to pursue, we might have defeated the enemy at Queenston where

he had collected his force or at any rate have saved immense magazines which were there burned at his leisure. Just as I was about counter marching Boyd came up with the remainder of his brigade (Miller was a part of it) which made us more than a match for a retreating enemy. But it was ordained otherwise." (Scott to Major Charles K. Gardner, 4 June 1813 in the Gardner Papers, New York State Library.)

Vignette 2: When Scott took two companies with him to the fort, he directed Lieutenant Colonel McFeely to begin the pursuit. McFeely wrote later:

I proceeded with the column until I came to the river, our men complained much for the want of water. I ordered the one half to go down the bank of the river and fill their canteens with water. When this was done I permitted the other half to go and water. On our way here we took about twenty prisoners, they were all Irishmen and had concealed themselves in houses and other places when on the retreat. In half an hour Scott came up riding a British officer's horse with the flag from Fort George hanging across the saddle before him. He swore he would sleep in it that night. He said the General's orders were to pursue the enemy. We marched in pursuit of the enemy about five miles, when orders came for the light troops to return to Fort George. I should have mentioned that Col. Miller with his regiment joined us at the place where we halted for water. We returned with reluctance from the pursuit. This was in my opinion highly censurable on our generals. We ought to have pursued the enemy night and day while they were under the panic. We could have captured all their stores and baggage that evening and the greater number of their army. (John C. Fredriksen, ed. "Chronicle of Valor: The Journal of a Pennsylvania Officer in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 67, [July 1984]: 265.)

Vignette 3: In his report to the War Department, Dearborn wrote:

The troops having been under arms from one o'clock in the morning were too much exhausted for any further pursuit."

(Dearborn to Armstrong, 27 May 1813, in *American State Papers: Military Affairs,* vol. 1, 445.)

Teaching Points: The position of the commander on the battlefield, retention of the initiative, prudent risk-taking.

Stand 3

Stoney Creek-Battlefield Park

Directions: Exit the Fort George parking lot and turn right/northwest on Queen's Parade. Drive .4 miles and turn left/southwest on King Street. Proceed .4 miles and turn right/northwest on Mary Street. Drive another .5 miles and take a half-left/west turn onto Lakeshore Road. Note that the streets are laid out in a regular grid and side streets will all connect to the major roads. Lakeshore Road lies roughly on the 1813 road closest to the lake connecting Newark/Fort George to Burlington Heights. Follow Lakeshore Road for about ten miles nearly to Port Dalhousie. Take a left/south turn onto Ontario Road and travel one mile to exit 47 of the QEW Highway. Routes from Lakeshore Road to the QEW are well marked.

Once on the QEW heading west toward Hamilton, note the escarpment on the left/south. Travel about 41 miles to exit 88. Take Centennial Parkway South for two miles and turn left onto King Street. Battlefield Park and the Battlefield House Museum are on the right. Park in the Battlefield Park lot.

An alternate, but slightly slower route, will trace the American approach march to Stoney Creek. Take QEW exit 83 and proceed south on highway 434/Fruitland Road. Travel south one mile and turn right/west on Queenston Road/Regional Road 8. Queenston Road lies along the path taken by Chandler's and Winder's Brigades. Travel 1.2 miles and take a half-left turn onto King Street East. King Street is the continuation of the road that connected Queenston with Burlington Heights and in 1813 was called the Queenston Road. Travel about 1.5 miles and cross over Stoney Creek. The battle was fought about 0.5 miles west of Stoney Creek. On the right is the Lion Monument. Battlefield Park is on the left.

Orientation: All sites are within walking distance of Battlefield Park. King Street divides the actual battlefield in half. The site of the fighting north of King Street is now entirely urban terrain. However, the sense of the battle is readily discernible in Battlefield Park. Battlefield Park encompasses thirty-two acres of the battlefield. Centered in the park is Battlefield Creek, which ran through an open meadow. The British attacked from west to east across the meadow

and creek to engage the Americans atop the gentle ridge line. Unlike today, there were few if any trees in the meadow in 1813.

Seek out the Gage House. This restored homestead is often open for tours, and it houses interesting militaria. The Gage House existed in 1813 and marked the southern limit of the battle. The ridge is easily viewed from the Gage House. Most of the American forces were atop the ridge facing west. Further south of the Gage House is Battlefield Monument that marks the northern edge of the Niagara Escarpment. There is no record of any fighting around Battlefield Monument. Most witnesses recalled that the flat-topped ridge was about twenty feet in elevation above the meadow and its slope was covered with a tangle of trees and brush. The area of the American camp was generally open with some stands of trees. Today, the ridge appears much reduced, yet gives a sense of the strong American position. For the following narrative, King Street is referred to by its 1813 name, the Queenston Road.

Situation 1: General Chandler chose a defensible site for his camp. Except for the advance guard manning the pickets and the 25th Infantry in the meadow north of Queenston Road, the two brigades were atop the ridge. The 2nd Light Dragoons, commnaded by Colonel James Burn, remained in reserve. The south side of the ridge merged into the foothills of the Niagara Escarpment and the north edge was protected by a swamp. Chandler posted two regiments, the 13th and 14th Infantry, about 750 men, about two miles away guarding the supply boats on the shores of Lake Ontario. There were approximately 2,300 soldiers in the American camp or on picket duty.

Chandler set up his tents immediately north of Towson's battery of three guns and one howitzer that was on Queenston Road atop the edge of the ridge. However, Chandler had no expectation of a night attack. He allowed his regimental commanders to select their own campsites.

Major Joseph L. Smith, father of Confederate general Edmund Kirby Smith, commanded the 25th Infantry. Initially, he ordered his camp established in the meadow along a lane that ran parallel to the creek. Further north along the lane was Captain Jacob Hindman's advance guard battalion consisting of three companies of the 2nd Artillery fighting as infantry. Smith was quite anxious at the pros-

pect of an enemy attack. Twice Smith approached Chandler to express his concerns and requested permission to remove his regiment from its exposed position. At the second request, Chandler relented. At about 2300, Smith and his officers woke the men and moved them from the forward position to a new line atop the low embankment. Left behind were the cooks tending their cooking fires. Smith allowed his men to rest, but no one was allowed to leave the battle line without permission. Interestingly, the men had weapons loaded with buckshot only. No one told Captain Hindman that the unit to his left had moved. The advance guard was left unsupported at the northern end of the meadow.

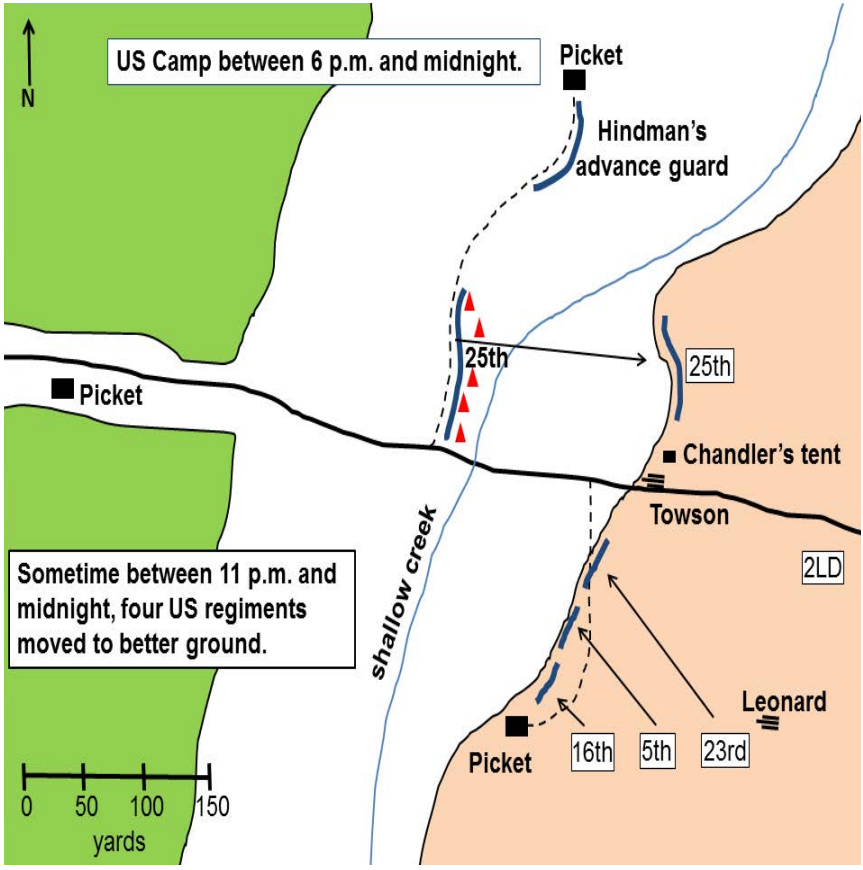

Figure 20. Stoney Creek Battlefield (1800-2400).

Vignette: Captain Ephraim Shaler of the 25th Infantry recorded the events of the 1813 campaign in his memoirs. His entry for the battle starts on the evening of 5 June:

> But night coming on and the weariness of the men, it was thought prudent to postpone the attack till morning: the several regiments composing General Chandler's brigade were therefore ordered to encamp; every regiment selecting its own ground to encamp on. This was a great military blunder and the first I had discovered since we left Fort George. Being in an enemy's country and within a few miles of a large body of well disciplined troops (besides militia and Indians, who had been hanging about us all day, though generally at a respectful distance) the whole brigade should have been encamped in regular military order, having a rallying point designated by the commanding General, to be understood by every commandant of a regiment; but unhappily for us, no such point was designated.

Shaler went on to describe the movement to the new position:

> Col. Joseph L. Smith, who commanded my regiment...came to me about 11 o'clock and said we must get the men up and move them out of the lane, for we shall be attacked before morning—there have been spies in the camp and they know the position of every regiment, and if we remain where we are, we shall be cut to pieces. (John C. Fredriksen, ed. "Memoirs of Captain Ephraim Shaler: A Connecticut Yankee in the War of 1812," *New England Quarterly* 57, [1984]:416-17.)

Situation 2: At about 2330, the British column began moving the seven miles from Burlington Heights toward the American camp. Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey ordered the men to remove the flints from their firelocks so that the Americans would not be warned by an accidental discharge. Harvey also demanded complete silence as his men trudged in near total darkness. The British were thus able to kill or capture the sentinels along the Queenston Road and quickly overpower the riflemen asleep in the church about a half mile west of the meadow.

Harvey and two light companies led the British march column, followed by General Vincent's staff officers and two veteran regiments, the 8th and the 49th Foot. An American sentinel noticed

the approaching column and fired his weapon before withdrawing quickly. At the noise of the discharge, British staff officers took up a cheer, ending all suspicion that the shot might have been accidental. The British light companies poured into the meadow followed by the center companies of the 49th Foot moving north of Queenston Road and the 8th Foot to the south. The British formed line and advanced bayonets lowered while American infantry and artillery came alive and prepared to open fire. North of the road, the 49th passed through the line of campfires and killed or captured the few cooks who had not escaped. The British infantry thought they had caught the regiment sleeping in the meadow. Now they were caught backlit by the campfires and without flints in their weapons.

Along the ridge, the Americans opened fire into the meadow. In the darkness, the only targets visible were the men of the 49th Foot and the Americans directed their attention there first. Hindman's advance guard opened fire as well and in the confusion, the Americans on the ridge could not tell friend from foe in the darkness. Towson ordered his guns to open fire but the guns failed. The artillerists repeatedly applied their porte-fires to the touchholes, but with no effect. Towson suspected the powder was damp and ordered the touchholes emptied and re-filled. Now the guns thundered into the ranks of the attackers. At some point, Towson turned his guns toward the muzzle flashes in the northern part of the meadow, inflicting some casualties on the advance guard battalion.

Eventually the British replaced their flints and returned American fire. Now the Americans detected the British south of the Queenston Road. Small parties of British infantry repeatedly assaulted the American lines, sometimes coming close enough to inflict bayonet wounds. However, American fire drove them off. All the while, British infantry whooped like native warriors creating a false impression in the minds of their enemy. The psychological impact was powerful if not decisive. Americans feared scalping more than anything and individually and in small groups, Americans drifted away from the firing line to seek shelter in the dark woods. Sometimes the British yelled, "Don't fire. You are firing at your own men." These false calls added to the general confusion of the battle in the dark.

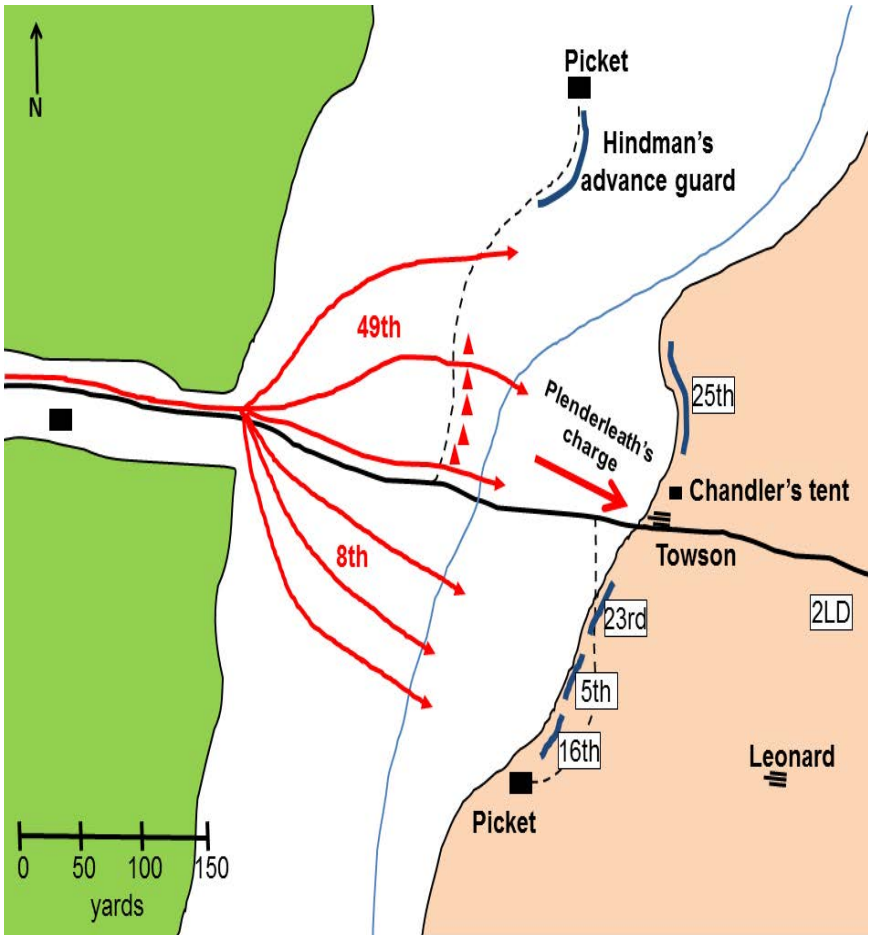

Figure 21. Stoney Creek Battlefield (0200 British Attack).

Vignette 1: Captain Ephraim Shaler of the 25th Infantry was with the cooks when he heard a shriek (probably from an American sentinel) followed shortly by war whoops and the British advance. He heard repeated shouts from who he thought was Vincent commanding "Charge the damned Yankees." Shaler remembered the British charging three times but driven off each time by his men's musketry. The soldiers of the 25th loaded their cartridges with twelve buckshot and no ball:

> During the hottest part of the battle, I happened to be standing near a brave young Irishman who was loading and firing away as fast as he could when a ball struck the barrel of his

musket while he was in the act of ramming home the cartridge, which so indented the barrel that he could not get his ramrod out: finding his gun would be useless, he exclaimed with an Irish oath—'I will give them ramrod and all', and fired away. I then gave him the musket of a soldier who had just been killed, and he went early at his work again. (John C. Fredriksen, editor. "Memoirs of Captain Ephraim Shaler: A Connecticut Yankee in the War of 1812," *New England Quarterly* 57, [1984]: 420.)

Vignette 2: A British Officer of the 49th Foot recalled:

The first volley of the enemy coming from a spot as 'dark as Erebus,' seemed like the bursting forth of a volcano. Then again all was dark and still save the moans of the wounded, the confused click! click! noise made by our men adjusting their flints and the ring of the enemy's ramrods in reloading. Again the flash and roar of the musketry, the whistling of the bullets and the crash of the cannon—Chaos had come again.

In the same letter he wrote:

I must give the enemy's troops great credit for having recovered from their confusion and for having shown so bold a front so very soon after having been so suddenly and complete surprised. (no author. Undated letter by an officer of the 49th Regiment of Foot found in "Battle of Stoney Creek." *Grimsby Historical Society Proceedings* 1, [1950]: 58-59.)

Teaching Points: Surprise, security, command and control, prudent risk-taking, operations in limited visibility, psychological operations.

Stand 4

Lion Monument/Smith's Knoll

Directions: From Battlefield Park walk east on King Street about 100 yards to Lion Monument.

Orientation: The Smith's Knoll cairn, also called Lion Monument, is the site of Towson's artillery position. The cairn is just north of King Street and is the location where Major Plenderleath's men, charging from the west, captured generals Chandler and Winder. The cairn also lies on the edge of the gentle ridge running north-south and marks the center of the general line of American defenses. Pleanderleath conducted his assault north of King Street across battlefield Creek and directly at Towson's battery. Lion Monument is also the site where the remains of American and British soldiers were first uncovered in 1888.

Figure 22. Lion Monument.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada, October 2011.

Situation 1: The British situation was desperate. Having failed to surprise the Americans, the British were now caught in low ground receiving heavy musketry and sporadic cannon fire. Officers steadied their men as best as they could, but unknown numbers slipped into the woods in the rear. Repeated bayonet attacks could not break the American lines on the lip of the ridge. At this moment Major Charles Plenderleath, commanding the 49th Foot, witnessed two cannon firing to his right. Plenderleath had not realized how close he was to the American guns. On the spur of the moment, Plenderleath decided to assault the guns before they could fire again.

Gathering no more than thirty nearby soldiers, Plenderleath ordered a charge. The British ran pell-mell toward the guns. Meanwhile, Captain Towson ordered his men to cease fire for the moment. He took some men to hitch horses to caissons in the event that he was ordered to displace the cannon. The Americans had stacked their muskets while serving the guns, a most unfortunate situation. Plenderleath, mounted on his horse, crashed into the battery followed by his men. The one-sided engagement ended quickly. The attackers killed three of Towson's men and took nineteen prisoners. Towson returned from the caissons to see what was happening. Discovering the situation, he ran toward the American rear, musket bullets whistling all about him. Some men of the 23rd Infantry to the south fired into the attackers. Plenderleath's horse went down with six bullet wounds. Plenderleath himself was twice wounded. For some unknown reason, the men of the 23rd, who nearly reversed the decisive action, faded into the darkness.

In a moment or two, General Chandler, sword in hand, limped toward the guns. He was alone because he had sent all three of his aides off with orders. His horse had earlier thrown him, and Chandler walked with difficulty. Unaware that the guns had changed hands, Chandler began giving orders. The British infantry quickly captured him and brought him to the rear of their lines. General Winder and a staff officer galloped up to the guns and suffered the same fate.

The British made off with two of Towson's four guns. One of the captured pieces was a brass howitzer, originally captured at Saratoga in 1777 by Major Henry Dearborn.

Harvey withdrew his shattered command back to Burlington Heights in the weak light of dawn. He urgently prepared for an

American attack he believed would follow the failed British attack. When the Americans learned that their generals were missing and presumed captured, command devolved upon Colonel James Burn, the cavalryman. Burn ordered the two brigades to immediately withdraw about a mile in order to collect stragglers and assess the situation. The army left precipitously, the dead unburied and supplies abandoned. The two regiments posted on the lake shore marched toward the battlefield as soon as there was enough light but arrived after the main force had departed. Eventually most of the two brigades were assembled. Burn gathered his field grade officers and conducted a somewhat contentious council of war. While some, particularly Colonel John Chrystie of the 13th Infantry, argued to attack Burlington Heights, most participants were more cautious. Burn decided to withdraw behind the protection of Forty Mile Creek and there await instructions from Dearborn at Fort George.

Burn's report sounded like a qualified victory to Dearborn. Aside from losing two generals, the Americans had driven off the enemy. The ailing general ordered Morgan Lewis to take the 6th Infantry and join the two brigades forty miles away. Lewis would then attack Burlington Heights or wherever he found the British. After Lewis set out, Dearborn received reports that a Royal Navy squadron was sighted off Newark. Dearborn knew that he could expect no help from Chauncey who had returned to Sackett's Harbor. Fearing that the British had returned to re-take Fort George, Dearborn hastily recalled Lewis and the entire force at Forty Mile Creek. In a few days, a chastened army stumbled into camp at Fort George. Due largely to Dearborn's illness and a lack of situational awareness, the Americans did nothing for a couple precious weeks.

Vignette1: Captain Ephraim Shaler recalled the confusion of the fight in the dark:

> At the commencement of the attack, the whole brigade was immediately under arms, ready to act as occasion might require: but no one knew where to go in the darkness of night, surrounded (as one might suppose from their yells) by all the Indians in Canada—there being, as I have before said, no rallying point designated, none could distinguish friend from foe; consequently all concert of action was lost, and confusion ensued:—

> our men often firing upon each other by mistake. The brigade was composed of gallant men and officers who were ready and willing to engage the enemy if they had known where to begin the work of death. (John C. Fredriksen, editor. "Memoirs of Captain Ephraim Shaler: A Connecticut Yankee in the War of 1812," *New England Quarterly* 57, [1984]: 419.)

Vignette 2: Captain Mordecai Meyers of the 13th Infantry was on the shores of Lake Ontario guarding the supply boats. The Americans with him heard the sound of battle and at first light marched south to rejoin the main army. Meyers recalled:

> Our regiment was counter-marched over the field of battle after having taken twenty or thirty prisoners. When we arrived at the ground we found it strewed with dead and wounded of both parties to the number of four or five hundred. The troops of both sides were scattered. We buried the dead and stacked and burned the arms and baggage for want of transportation. We brought off the wounded and prepared to follow our retiring forces. (Mordecai Meyers, *Reminiscences, 1780 to 1814, including incidents of the War of 1812-14*, Washington DC: The Crane Company, 1900, 32).

Vignette 3: Colonel James Burn assumed command in the morning and called a council of war to help him decide the next move. Burn was cautious by nature and lacked confidence in his ability to determine the best course of action. Councils of war are notorious for providing cover for a cautious commander:

> When the day appeared I found myself in command and not knowing what had become either of the generals or a great portion of the army who *inter nos* [between us] had skulked into the woods, and finding the ammunition of those who had gallantly defended themselves in many instances nearly expended, I called a council of the field officers who were of the opinion we ought to retire to our former position at the 40 Mile Creek than [there?] to join our boats and get supplies. (Burn to Charles J. Ingersoll, 1 July 1813, in John C. Fredriksen, editor. "Colonel James Burn and the War of 1812: The Letters of a South Carolina Officer," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 90, [October 1989]: 306.)

Vignette 4: Dearborn wrote of the battle to Secretary of War Armstrong "If either of the general officers had remained in command, the enemy would have been pursued and cut up, or if Colonel Burn had been an officer of infantry." (Dearborn to Armstrong, 6 June 1813, in *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, vol. 1, 445.)

Vignette 5: From his captivity, Brigadier General Chandler sent a report to Dearborn. Several claims made by Chandler had been disputed by his subordinates. "I did expect the enemy would attack us that night, if he intended to fight; but perhaps, this was not expected by all." (Chandler to Dearborn, 18 June 1813, in *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, vol. 1, 448.)

Vignette 6: Lieutenant Joseph Hawley Dwight, of the 13th Infantry, reflected the frustration of many when he commented on the lack of skill and resolve of the army's senior leaders. Referring specifically to General Chandler, Dwight wrote, "Here we saw the blessed effects of having plough joggers for generals whose greatest merits consist in being warm partisans and supporting administration right or wrong." (John C. Fredriksen, editor. "'Plow-Joggers for Generals': The Experiences of a New York Ensign in the War of 1812," *Indiana Military History Journal* 11, [October 1986]: 19.)

Vignette 7: On 10 June, Major General Lewis assumed command temporarily from Dearborn who was quite ill. Lewis sent his analysis of the battle to Secretary of War Armstrong. "A view of General Chandler's encampment will be sufficient to show that his disaster was owing to its arrangement; its centre being its weakest point, and that being discovered by the enemy in the evening, received the combined attack of his whole force, and his line was completely cut." (Lewis to Armstrong, 14 June 1813, in *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, vol. 1, 446.)

Situation 2: Henry Dearborn recovered his health sufficiently to reassume command. After the Battle of Stoney Creek, he made one more attempt to regain the initiative. The following is Dearborn's report on the catastrophe at Beaver Dams. While there are some errors of fact, Dearborn's report is generally a correct account. Note that Dearborn implicates Boerstler's judgment in creating the

disaster. The 'informant' was a member of Doctor Cyrenius Chapin's mounted volunteers:

> I have the mortification of informing you of an unfortunate and unaccountable event, which occurred yesterday. On the 23rd, at evening, Lieut. Colonel [Charles] Boerstler, with 570 men, infantry, artillery, cavalry, and riflemen, in due proportion, was ordered to march, by way of Queenston, to a place called the Beaver Dams, on the high ground, about eight or nine miles from Queenston, to attack and disperse a body of the enemy collected there for the purpose of procuring provisions, and harassing those inhabitants who are considered friendly to the United States. Their force was, from the most direct information, composed of one company of the 104th regiment, above 80 strong; from 150 to 200 militia; and from 50 to 60 Indians. At eight o'clock yesterday morning, when within about two miles of the Beaver dams, our detachment was attacked from an ambuscade, but soon drove the enemy some distance into the woods, and then retired to a clear field, and sent an express for a reinforcement, saying he would maintain his position until reinforced. A reinforcement of 300 men marched immediately, under the command of Colonel [John] Chrystie; but on arriving at Queenstown, Colonel Chrystie received authentic information that Lieutenant Colonel Boerstler, with his command, had surrendered to the enemy, and the reinforcement returned to camp. A man who belonged to a small corps of mounted volunteer riflemen came in this morning, who states that the enemy surrounded our detachment in the woods, and towards twelve o'clock commenced a general attack; that our troops fought more than two hours, until the artillery had expended the whole of its ammunition, and then surrendered; and at the time of the surrender, the informant made his escape. Why it should have been deemed proper to remain several hours in a position surrounded with woods, without either risking a decisive action, or effecting a retreat, remains to be accounted for, as well as the project of waiting for a reinforcement from a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles. (Dearborn to Armstrong, 25 June 1813, in *American State Papers: Military Affairs,* vol. 1, 449.)

Teaching Points: Surprise, mission command, command and control, decision-making, prudent risk-taking, fratricide.

Stand 5

Fort Niagara

Directions: From Fort George, take the Niagara Parkway six miles south to Queenston. The parkway ascends the escarpment. Follow signs 'To the U.S.A.' and cross the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. The Lewiston-Queenston Bridge passes over the picturesque Niagara Gorge, an uncrossable impediment in 1812-14. Once through US Customs, follow the signs to the Robert Moses Parkway-North. This Parkway descends the escarpment, passes Lewiston on the east, and takes the traveler to Youngstown. Follow the signs to Fort Niagara State Park and to the Visitor Center. The park entrance fee is collected at the entrance station soon after entering the park. There is plenty of parking at the Visitor Center. From Buffalo, take Interstate 190 North. At exit 25, follow signs to the Robert Moses Parkway-North.

The Old Fort Niagara Association operates the restored fort as a museum on behalf of the State of New York. It spearheaded the original restoration in cooperation with the Army and the War Department beginning in 1927. This self-funded non-profit volunteer group also administers and maintains an excellent Visitor Center with interpretive exhibits, audio-visual presentations, the obligatory gift shop, and an extensive range of events (tours, re-enactments, special exhibits, lectures etc.) The gift shop sells the entire range of historical publications produced by the Association, several of which deal with War of 1812 topics. The organization also produces a superb quarterly newsletter-journal with membership. Consider consulting the website before making your visit. A visit to Old Fort Niagara could take up the better part of the day.

Orientation: Once departing the Visitors Center, walk to the fort. Note the twin earthen bastions connected by a curtain wall and fronted by a triangular ravelin. The landward side of the fort was protected in the best Vauban style of military engineering.

The South Redoubt lies just within the entrance to the fort. Its twin, the North Redoubt, is seen across the parade ground. In 1813, these twin structures in each bastion were called redoubts. In engineering terms, a redoubt is a small, self-contained fortification with-

out any connected structures. The two square, stone redoubts are nearly unique in American fortifications. These structures resemble their counterparts, timber blockhouses, which were centers of defense across the American frontier. Beyond the South Redoubt lies the major building of Fort Niagara, the massive French Castle. All three stone structures were impervious to artillery fire of the period. During the war, the roofs of all three buildings were removed. The wooden roofs would be a fire hazard if struck by hot shot. Also, the supports for the roofs would hinder the full range of movement of the guns positioned on the strong upper floors.

Situation: In the fall of 1813, Major General James Wilkinson, Henry Dearborn's replacement, shifted military operations to the Saint Lawrence River. Most of the regulars at Fort George sailed to Sackett's Harbor to join the expedition against Montreal. In December 1813, a small number of New York militia, nearly mutinous and anxious to return to their homes, occupied Fort George. Their commander, militia Brigadier General George McClure, despaired of defending Fort George through the winter, and ordered a withdrawal to New York. However, in doing so, he gave the fateful order to burn the unoffending village of Newark. McClure clearly overstepped his orders. Cyrenius Chapin vehemently argued with McClure, but on 10 December, McClure and a handful of Canadian Volunteers set about this grim task.

Given barely an hour to vacate their homes, old men, women, and children gathered what belongings they could carry and sought shelter where they might. British retribution followed quickly. On the evening of 18-19 December, a 562-man assault force crossed the Niagara River and moved stealthily on Fort Niagara. The British advance guard surrounded a house in Youngstown occupied by an American picket seeking shelter from the cold. Without firing a shot, the British bayoneted everyone in the house.

At the fort, the British easily negotiated through a gate left unlocked. With a yell, the redcoats entered the fort, bayonets leveled. Except for a number of guards, the Americans were caught sleeping. Nonetheless, the occupants of the South Redoubt and a barracks building put up a fierce, if futile, resistance. The assailants refused offers of surrender until their officers acted to stop the

killing. The Americans suffered between 65 and 80 killed or dead of wounds. The remainder of the garrison, about 375 soldiers, was captured. Over the next two weeks, British soldiers and their allied Indians raided the entire length of the Niagara River, burning nearly every structure. Arguing that all civilian homes, at one time or another, had housed American soldiers, the British commanders justified the destruction of private dwellings. Some Indians killed and scalped a small number of civilians. Fort Niagara remained in British hands throughout the rest of the war. As American soldiers gathered in Buffalo in the early spring of 1814, they were greeted by a burned-out town. The sight no doubt planted seeds of retribution in the minds of some.

Figure 23. The South Redoubt.

Source: Courtesy the Old Fort Niagara Association, Fort Niagara State Park, Youngstown, New York.

Vignette 1: Cyrenius Chapin was captured at the defense of Buffalo. Knowing that he had escaped captivity after the Battle of Beaver Dams, the British were extra cautious. Chapin spent the next nine months incarcerated in Montreal. Some time during captivity,

he wrote a letter to the public describing George McClure's role in the destruction of Newark:

> The ill-fated town of Newark was burnt, under his [McClure's] orders, the night of the 10th of December, 1813. Here was exhibited a scene of distress which language would be inadequate to describe. Women and children were turned out of doors in a cold and stormy night; the cries of infants, the decrepitude of age, the debility of sickness, had no impression upon this monster in human shape; they were consigned to that house whose canopy was the heavens, and whose walls were as boundless as the wide world. (Cyrenius Chapin in an undated letter from William Ketchum, *Authentic and Comprehensive History of Buffalo.* Buffalo, New York, Rockwell, Baker, and Hill, Printers, 1865, 405-6.)

Vignette 2: Lieutenant Driscoll of the 100th Regiment of Foot was a participant in the battle. His memoir provides a detailed account of part of the assault after the British have gained access to the fort:

> Had the assailants been discreetly silent, they might have effected the capture without loss to themselves or the enemy, but, their blood being up, they uttered a terrific yell, which roused the sleeping garrison and occasioned some resistance. A cannon, turned inwards, was fired from the roof of the south-western tower [the South Redoubt], followed by a slight pattering of musketry. To prevent repetition of the former, Lieutenant Nolan of the 100th, a man of great personal strength and ardent courage, rushed into the lower part of the tower, regardless of what foes he might find there, and by what friends he might be followed. Next morning his body was found, the breast pierced by a deep bayonet wound, at the bottom of which were a musket ball and three buckshot. But he had not died unavenged. One American lay at his feet, whom he had killed with a pistol shot, while the cloven skulls of two others attested his tremendous strength of arm and desperate valour. Some of his men, however, who had seen him plunge into the darkness, followed him, and though too late to save him, had taken the tower, slaying the defenders to a man. This resistance exasperated our men, who rushed wildly about into every building, bayoneting every

> American they met. The carnage, indeed, would have amounted to extermination if the British officers had not zealously exerted themselves in the cause of mercy. (Lieutenant Driscoll, "The Capture of Fort Niagara," in E. Cruikshank, editor. *The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in 1812-14*, vol. IX, Lundy's Lane Historical Society, undated, 20.)

Vignette 3: The New York newspapers were quickly filled with eye-witness and secondary reports of the destruction of Newark and the villages on the New York frontier. Newspaper editors re-published accounts among themselves. The following letter containing generally correct information was printed in a New York City paper on 11 January 1814:

> A party of the enemy, on the 30th December, crossed the Niagara, near Black Rock. They were met by militia, under Gen. [Amos] Hall, who, being overpowered by numbers, was forced to give way. The enemy burnt the villages of Black Rock and Buffalo. Col. Charles and Major Chapin were taken prisoners, and Mrs. Lovejoy, whose husband was serving in the militia, was murdered by the British Indians. After the destruction of Lewiston by the British, the bodies of William Gardiner, John E. Low, E. St. John, (whose family can not be found,) Doctor Alvard and others, were found scalped and horribly mangled; many others, it was supposed, had been thrown into the flames. (This newspaper article is found in William Ketchum, *Authentic and Comprehensive History of Buffalo.* Buffalo, New York, Rockwell, Baker, and Hill, Printers, 1865, 385.)

Teaching Points: Surprise, security, command and control, war crimes.

Chapter 5

1814 Campaign

Campaign Overview

Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813 led directly to the strategic retreat of French forces back to France. Great Britain and her allies were pursuing the armies of the French emperor with a vengeance. President Madison and his Secretary of War, John Armstrong, were under no illusion as to the implications of these events. Before long, Great Britain would have huge resources of trained manpower and naval might to throw against the United States. No port on the Atlantic or the Gulf Coast would be safe from devastating raids. Moreover, the president expected a constant stream of experienced soldiers landing in Canada with their sights set on pushing back the American borders. If the United States was to win this war by seizing Canada, it would have to act quickly and decisively.

Madison and Armstrong reacted to the increasing threat. Clearly, the old generals had failed the war effort. Armstrong accepted Major General Wade Hampton's resignation. He sent Major General Morgan Lewis to a quiet theater, the command of the Third Military District responsible for the greater New York City area. The Secretary of War charged Major General James Wilkinson with neglect of duty. This sidelined that old intriguer for the remainder of the war as he awaited his court-martial. Armstrong created two commands within the Ninth Military District. Major General George Izard would command the Right Division centered on the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River invasion corridor. This force was intended to strike Montreal. Major General Jacob Brown, junior to Izard, commanded the Left Division. Brown was responsible for the defense of the New York frontier from Buffalo on Lake Erie to Ogdensburg on the Saint Lawrence River. Brown was also responsible for offensive actions aimed at the Niagara Peninsula or the key British naval base at Kingston on Lake Ontario.

Madison elevated several colonels to the rank of brigadier general, three of whom Armstrong assigned to the Left Division. Win-

field Scott, a career soldier, was aggressive and charismatic. Brown assigned him to command a brigade in the Left Division. Eleazar Wheelock Ripley had been a successful politician when the war erupted. He was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel and assigned to the 21st US Infantry Regiment. Eventually commanding the regiment, Ripley turned the 21st into a particularly effective fighting organization. Brown gave him command of a brigade, although the two were of distinctly different temperaments. Ripley was more risk-averse than either Brown or Scott. Edmund Pendleton Gaines was promoted last of the three. A professional soldier, Gaines commanded at Sackett's Harbor, charged with the defense of that critical shipbuilding base while Brown was away.

Armstrong issued Brown guidance early in 1814 that would serve to confuse Brown and ultimately to direct the Left Division away from the decisive objectives of the British shipbuilding base at Kingston or the key logistics center at Montreal. Armstrong sent Brown two letters. The first directed Brown to consider attacking Kingston across the ice if practicable. The second directed Brown to take a large force westward to retake Fort Niagara. Armstrong suggested that Brown use this second letter to mask Brown's objective should he choose to attack Kingston. Brown consulted with Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commander of all naval forces on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain. Chauncey and Brown agreed that an attack across the ice was too risky to attempt. Chauncey also persuaded Brown that the second letter was an alternate course of action. Brown put his troops on the march to the Niagara Frontier. When Armstrong realized that Brown had misconstrued his guidance, he failed to re-direct Brown, but instead urged him to "go on and prosper. Good consequences are sometimes the result of mistakes."

Brown kept enough forces under Gaines to protect the American squadron at Sackett's Harbor. He placed Scott in charge of the bulk of the division at Buffalo (four infantry regiments plus some artillery) with the task of preparing to invade Canada. Scott developed a rigorous regimen of drill and inspections and by July, Scott's First Brigade was ready for combat. More regular troops assembled at Buffalo and Brown organized these as the Second Brigade under Ripley. Many of these troops had been trained under Scott. Governor Daniel Tompkins of New York ordered formation of a brigade

of US Volunteers to fight under New York Militia Brigadier General Peter B. Porter, perhaps one of the finest militia generals of the war. However, at the time of the invasion, Porter had only three elements under his immediate command, a regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers under Colonel James Fenton, a battalion of Iroquois warriors under the famous Seneca orator Red Jacket, and a company of New York mounted riflemen. A single battalion of New York Volunteers commanded by Colonel Philetus Swift was on the march to the Niagara but would miss the opening battles.

Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, had planned for a flexible defense of Fort Niagara and the Niagara Peninsula. Major General Phineas Riall commanded the British Right Division, charged with the defense of the Niagara Peninsula. Riall was aggressive and held American troops in low regard bordering on contempt. Both Drummond and Riall overestimated the size of the Left Division, believing that Brown had 7,000 troops along the Niagara River. Brown commanded no more than 4,000 supported by 600 Iroquois. Riall had approximately 3,000 regulars and 800 native warriors at key points along the Niagara and at Burlington Heights.

President Madison issued his strategy for 1814 on 7 June, very late in the campaign season. Brown was to make the main attack on Canada, aimed at seizing Burlington Heights. Burlington Heights, a long narrow ridge west of Burlington Bay, guarded the road between York (modern day Toronto) and British posts on the upper great lakes. Madison was determined to recapture Mackinac, a post lost early in the war. Now that the United States controlled Lake Erie, supplies to Mackinac and other British troops on the upper lakes travelled by land. Seizing Burlington Heights would effectively cut the supply line and make British resupply of Mackinac problematic.

However, Madison did not order Commodore Chauncey to seize control of Lake Ontario, presumably by bringing Commodore Sir James Yeo to battle. Chauncey and Yeo were locked in a shipbuilding arms race, and Yeo could prevent the Americans from gaining control of that strategic lake merely by avoiding a fight. Even if Brown captured Burlington Heights, he could not retain it unless Chauncey agreed to resupply him by water. For his part, Chauncey would divert no naval power to support Brown until the American

squadron controlled the lake. Brown and Chauncey exchanged notes in which Brown asked Chauncey to be at the western end of Lake Ontario by 10 July. Chauncey replied that he hoped to sail about that time, but would only head west if Yeo led him there. Ultimately, there was little Brown could do to advance the war effort until Chauncey brought Yeo to battle. As it turned out, that lake battle never happened. Nonetheless, Brown was determined to begin the campaign, hoping that Chauncey would appear at a propitious time.

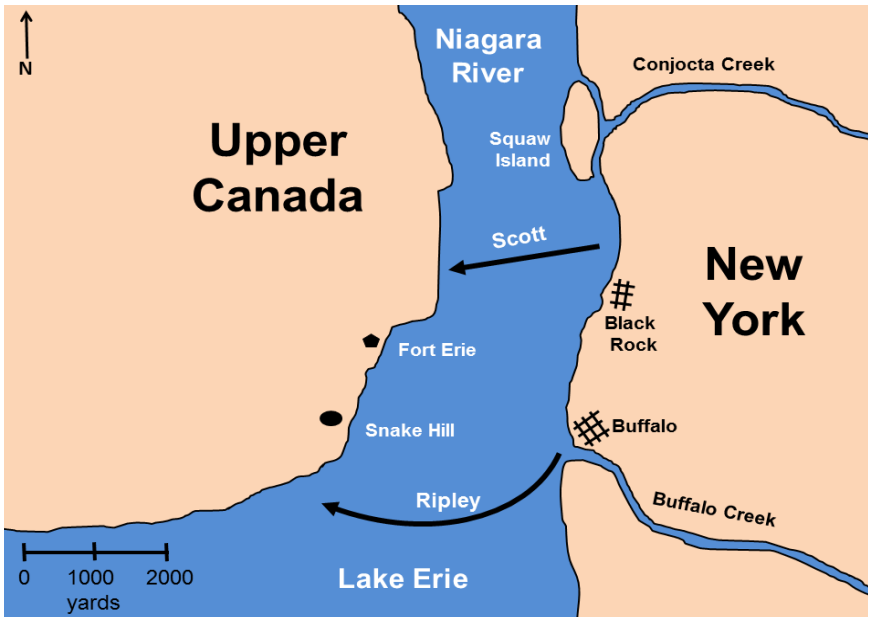

Figure 24. 3 July.

The Battle of Fort Erie

After midnight on 3 July, a portion of Scott's Brigade embarked from the shoreline between Buffalo and Black Rock. Their mission was to land north of Fort Erie and to move toward the fort. An element of Ripley's Brigade departed the mouth of Buffalo Creek in two schooners and two smaller craft. These four vessels would land their troops south of Fort Erie. Thus, Brown hoped to surround this British bastion, cutting off all retreat. Unfortunately, Ripley and his first wave got lost in the dense lake fog and landed after dawn. Brown, controlling the embarkation, shifted boats so that his two

brigades were largely across by noon. Porter's Brigade would cross after the two regular brigades had landed in Canada.

By mid afternoon, Major Thomas Jesup's 25th Infantry was formed up outside of Fort Erie. Inside, Major Thomas Buck commanded 137 soldiers, mostly from the 100th Regiment of Foot. His gunners fired a shrapnel round over the colors of the 25th, wounding four of the six color corporals. Jesup calmly withdrew his soldiers to the cover of a wood line as a battery of American guns took up their positions. Buck had only three artillery pieces and was convinced that he could withstand neither a bombardment nor an assault. After a quick negotiation, Buck surrendered his men and his fort. A company of Jesup's men entered the fortification, took down the British flag, and planted their regimental standard and national colors upon the ramparts. The Left Division had won its first engagement of a long and bloody campaign.

The Battle of Chippawa

Independence Day 1814 witnessed the crossing of the remainder of the Left Division into Canada and the advance up the western shore of the Niagara River toward the Chippawa River. Scott's Brigade, reinforced by a company of artillery and a company of light dragoons, led the division along the river road. Riall's next fortified position was at the bridge crossing the Chippawa. There were a few blockhouses guarding the barracks and warehouses on the north shore and a *tete-de-pont* protecting the southern end of the bridge. This type of defensive work was an earthen wall, often shaped as a two-sided triangle. It protected the bridge from cannon fire directly along the axis of the road bed. Riall had also sent out a covering force led by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pearson to maintain contact with Scott's men and to slow them down without becoming decisively engaged. Scott's mission was to capture the bridge intact before the British could reinforce this inherently strong defensive line. Pearson's men tore up the planking on bridges over the several streams flowing across Scott's path. However, Scott's Brigade pushed on and by the end of the day, had drawn up on an open meadow south of the Chippawa. Scott carefully examined the British defenses and concluded, correctly, that a crossing of the river would have to be deliberate and would require more troops and artil-

lery than he possessed. Scott pulled back behind Street's Creek and his men bedded down for the evening while the rest of the Division slowly marched into the new camp.

The battlefield at Chippawa is on flat ground. Immediately along the Niagara River was a road and to the west of that, a meadow cut by a few lines of fences. About three-quarters of a mile west of the river lay a primeval forest cluttered with fallen trees. A tongue of this forest extended to within a quarter mile of the Niagara River. This group of woods cut the line of sight between the bridge across the Chippawa and a lesser bridge across Street's Creek two miles away.

Brown with his two brigades of regulars was encamped on 5 July as Porter's men marched northward to join them. Brown planned to attack Riall's position behind the Chippawa on the following day. Riall had other plans. Unaware that Fort Erie had fallen and believing that he faced only a portion of the invading force, Riall decided to attack. He believed that American units were inherently brittle, that they would break upon a determined attack by British regulars. The British commander sent a body of western native warriors into the forest to snipe at the American camp. These Indians were the remains of Tecumseh's confederation and continued to follow the Prophet, Tecumseh's brother and the ideological leader of the movement. Brown found Porter's Brigade approaching camp and ordered Porter to clear the forest of this irritant.

Porter marched his men into the forest, Iroquois leading and Pennsylvanians following, in a single file perpendicular to the Niagara River. Once there, he had his men face northward and begin moving through the forest. The fighting was brutal, particularly as the New York natives met the western warriors. Four companies of Canadian militia and John Norton's Grand River Indians reinforced the western natives but they, too, fell to the Iroquois and Pennsylvanians. However, as the Americans pushed relentlessly through the forest, they dispersed into ever smaller groups out of supporting range. As Riall marched three infantry battalions and two companies of artillery across the Chippawa bridge, he sent three companies of light infantry into the forest to stabilize the right flank of his impending attack. These British regulars stopped Porter's attack cold and soon hundreds of Pennsylvanians and New York Iroquois were

streaming back to their starting point. Porter was unable to maintain a defense in the forest, but he was able to rally his brigade close to the American camp. Although defeated in their attempt to clear the forest, Porter's men inflicted more than 100 casualties, mostly KIA, upon the Indians and Canadian militia, suffering only 35 themselves.

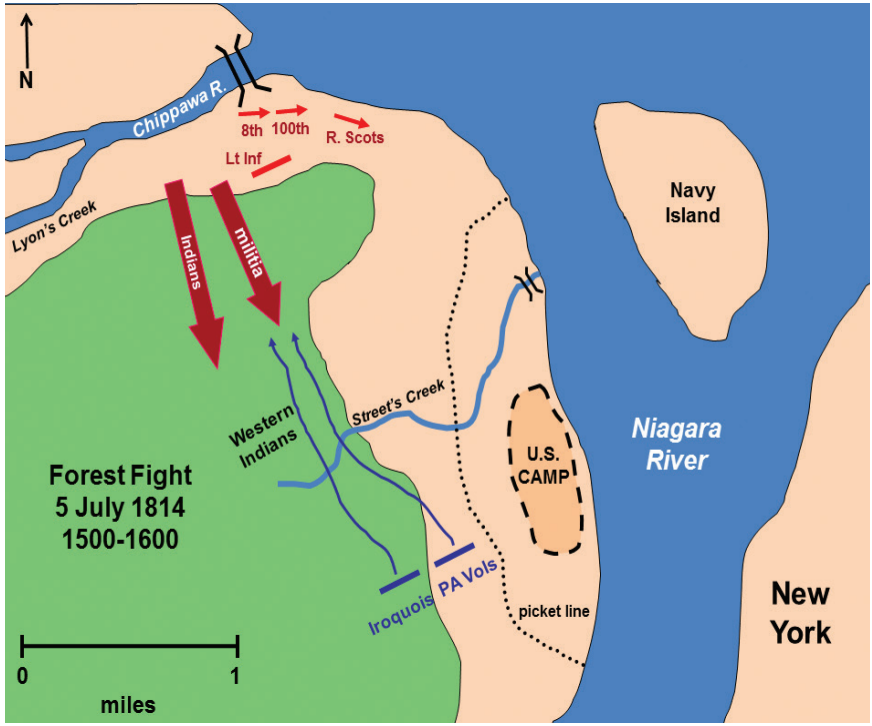

Figure 25. The Battle of Chippawa, 5 July 1814.

Brown was near Street's Creek when he saw a column of dust arise over the tongue of the forest. He surmised, correctly, that a British column was heading toward the American camp. Scott's Brigade was formed up ready to drill in the meadow just as Brown's order to give battle reached him. As Scott's brigade marched across the bridge over Street's Creek, British shot and grape flew over their heads.

The two brigades, commanded by Riall and Scott respectively, formed up in line across from one another in the meadow. Riall, who had assumed by the gray coats of the Americans that they were militiamen, was surprised at the steady movement of Scott's men, advancing heedless of artillery fire now landing in their midst. "These

are regulars," he blurted out to one of his regimental commanders.[1] Scott, seeing Porter's natives and Pennsylvanians streaming rearward through the forest, sent Thomas Jesup and the 25th Infantry into the woods to secure the brigade's left flank.

The two brigades were quite evenly matched. Scott led about 1350 infantrymen and seven light guns. Riall commanded 1400 infantry and six guns, two of which were heavy twenty-four pounders. The resulting firefight was fierce, with neither side willing to give an inch. American fire was somewhat more effective as the Americans fired buck and ball, three buckshot accompanying each musket ball in the cartridge. For his part, Jesup had eliminated the British threat in the forest and now brought his men into the meadow on Riall's flank. The 25th fired three volleys and charged. Scott's other two battalions surged forward as well. The red line broke. The British infantry maintained cohesion but fell back through the defile formed by the tongue of woods and the Niagara, crossing the bridge across the Chippawa and removing the planking so that the Americans could not pursue. The British suffered approximately 500 casualties, the Americans 325.

Historian Henry Adams wrote:

> The Battle of Chippawa was the only occasion during the war when equal bodies of regular troops met face to face, in extended lines on an open plain in broad daylight, without advantage of position; and never again after that combat was an army of American regulars beaten by British troops. Small as the affair was, and unimportant in military results, it gave to the United States army a character and pride it had never before possessed.[2]

Brown knew that the battle fought so ferociously was not decisive. The British remained behind a formidable river defense. Brown also knew that his campaign would be limited unless Commodore Chauncey appeared near the mouth of the Niagara River. Brown could not control the latter, so he focused his immediate attention on prying the British out of their strong position. The Americans found and improved an old roadway through the forest leading to the place where Lyon's Creek flowed into the Chippawa River. American engineers and West Point graduates, Major William McRee and Bre-

vet Major Eleazar Wood, directed work parties to bridge both waterways. Riall, discovering that his strong position would soon be outflanked, attacked the unfinished crossing site with a battalion of infantry supported by three guns. The Americans easily drove off the assailants. Riall understood that preserving his force was more important than defending a river line so he withdrew his small division all the way north to Fort George.

Riall's superior, Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond, read Riall's report of the loss at Chippawa. Drummond, then at Kingston, was unwilling to give up the Niagara Peninsula after a single fight. He ordered reinforcements to join the Right Division at Fort George. Meanwhile, native warriors on both sides were appalled by the heavy losses suffered in the forest fight. Emissaries from Red Jacket's battalion and the Grand River Iroquois who were fighting under their war chief, John Norton, met secretly. They forged a consensus that recognized that the Iroquois were being ground up in what was essentially a white man's war. While the decision to remain in the fight or to withdraw was an individual one, most of the Iroquois departed for their homes. The western Indians reported the battle results to the Prophet. Seeing the British apparently giving up the fight and fearful of being abandoned as had happened so often in the past, the Prophet decided to watch the campaign from the sidelines. Only John Norton and a handful of braves remained fighting alongside their red-coated allies.

Over the next week, Brown brought his division to Queenston. He shifted his supply line so that food and ammunition were brought to Lewiston and crossed the river to Queenston. Brown considered two potential objectives. First, he could move on Fort George where he might trap a portion of the British Right Division. Also, it would make re-supply of the British garrison at Fort Niagara on the US side of the river more difficult. Second, the Left Division could seize Burlington Heights about sixty miles away. That would cut the British land line of communication to posts further west. However, the Americans could not remain at Burlington Heights for any length of time without resupply by Chauncey's lake vessels.

On 15 July, Porter's and Ripley's Brigades surrounded Fort George at a distance of about a mile. Engineer Major Wood and a strong party of New York Volunteers moved to a copse of trees

a few hundred yards from the fort. Wood carefully scrutinized the earthen bastions and curtain wall surmounted by wooden pickets. He judged the walls too difficult to breach by the division's few eighteen-pounder guns. Riall's artillery and engineer officers, however, thought Fort George's walls to be no match for American artillery and that the weak fortification could fall to an assault even if not bombarded by heavy artillery.

On 10 July, Brown requested that Gaines, at Sackett's Harbor, send five eighteen-pounder guns by bateaux to reinforce the Left Division's artillery. Gaines dutifully loaded ten bateaux and gave Major Ludowick Morgan and his riflemen the task of ferrying the guns westward. However, Morgan's group could not evade Royal Navy gunboats blockading Sackett's Harbor. Brown had not received word that the guns from Sackett's Harbor were not coming. Indeed, he hoped that both the eighteen-pounders and Chauncey's squadron would appear on Lake Ontario any day. On 20 July, Brown broke camp at Queenston and brought the entire Left Division to surround Fort George. He hoped that Riall might accept the challenge and confront the Americans on the open ground around the fort. For his part, Riall believed himself entirely outnumbered and refused to give battle. Brown, frustrated beyond all measure, returned to Queenston on 22 July. There he received a note from Gaines stating that the siege guns were blockaded in port and that Chauncey was too ill to lead the squadron to Brown's aid.

What happened next speaks to the drive and determination of the new crop of officers that emerged during the war. While Henry Dearborn or Morgan Lewis might have hunkered down in a safe location awaiting a decisive battle on Lake Ontario, Brown chose a bold move. He returned to the camp south of the Chippawa River. There, the Left Division would leave tents behind and carrying as much food and ammunition as they could, would march on Burlington Heights. This, hoped Brown, would force Riall to reopen the British supply line by giving battle. Brown won his risky gamble, but not in the way he intended. Even then, Gordon Drummond was on his way to the Niagara with fresh troops and with the intention of throwing the Americans out of Upper Canada.

The Battle of Lundy's Lane

Once encamped behind the Chippawa River, Brown posted the 9th US Infantry Regiment under Major Henry Leavenworth north of the river to guard the bridge. However, Brown committed an unusual error; he failed to throw his dragoons and mounted rifles north of the river to secure the division. On 25 July, Brown told Scott to prepare to move northward on the following day to attempt to draw Riall into battle. Had Brown's cavalry been in the field, they would not have failed to detect Riall with 1100 regulars and experienced militiamen taking position along Lundy's Lane, hardly two miles north of the 9th Infantry.

Drummond, now at Fort Niagara, sent a raiding party to destroy boats and artillery batteries along the eastern shore of the Niagara River. Frantic reports reached Brown on the afternoon of the 25th that the huge stockpiles of supplies at Fort Schlosser were in danger of capture or destruction. Schlosser was on the New York shore, less than two miles from Brown's encamped division. Leavenworth had sent Brown reports of British patrols at Willson's Tavern, near Niagara Falls. Leavenworth surmised that these were indicative of a larger force nearby. Brown chose to discount these reports, yet he had to defend his supplies at Schlosser. Brown could not easily reinforce the tiny garrison at Fort Schlosser, but he could divert British attention away from the supplies. Brown ordered Scott to take his brigade, Towson's artillery, and a company of dragoons and move north toward Queenston, thus perhaps drawing British attention from a further advance on the east side of the Niagara. He warned Scott to report if he met the British in any strength. The ever-pugnacious Scott believed that his orders were to find and fight the enemy. Meanwhile, Drummond crossed over to the Canadian shore and ordered a full concentration of the Right Division at Lundy's Lane. It was time to give battle.

The Battle of Lundy's Lane formed three phases. The first was the unequal battle between Scott's Brigade and the British Right Division. The second was the assault by Ripley's Second Brigade that pushed British forces off of the ridge line. The third consisted of multiple British assaults that ultimately failed to recapture the

ridge. The second and third phases were fought in darkness with little moonlight.

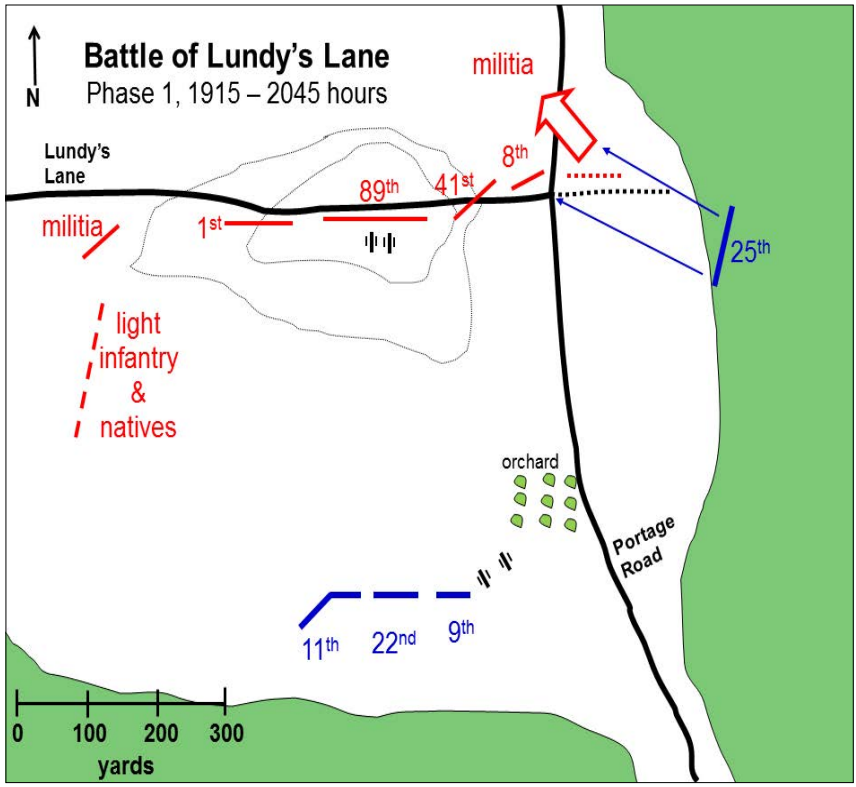

Figure 26. Lundy's Lane-Phase 1.

Scott's Brigade comprised four regiments: Leavenworth's 9th, Major John McNeill's 11th, Colonel Hugh Brady's 22nd, and Jesup's 25th—in all 1100 infantry. Brevet Major Nathan Towson brought two six-pounders and a howitzer. Scott met the proprietor of Willson's Tavern and received an old report of 1100 enemy along Lundy's Lane just beyond a woods. However, as Scott's Brigade passed through the woods and entered the cleared fields at the foot of the ridge line, they discovered a much more formidable foe. Hundreds of British infantry had reinforced those that the innkeeper was aware of. Nonetheless, Scott decided to attack. He sent Jesup to the east of the Portage Road and into the woods. Scott gave orders for the other three regiments to form line parallel to Lundy's Lane about

400 yards away. He gave orders to Towson to set up his battery along the road.

Lundy's Lane ran across the top of a low ridge before it intersected the Portage Road. The ridge was, at its highest, perhaps fifty feet above the surrounding cultivated fields. The southern slope was gentle, while the northern slope was more steeply formed. The elevation was a problem for Towson's guns. Their fire would plunge onto the ridge, ball burying itself in the soil, while British fire would skip along the hard ground, bouncing through the American lines.

Scott's line of infantry and Towson's battery fired ineffectually for about an hour at an enemy all but out of musket range. Scott's men were taking casualties from British artillery fire. They were fast using up their ammunition. McNeil was wounded and carried to the rear. Brady received a serious wound, but remained in the saddle. Every company commander in the 11th was wounded. The single bright spot in this phase of the battle occurred to the east. In the failing light, Jesup brought his regiment through the woods. They encountered a battalion of well-trained militia at the junction of the Portage Road and Lundy's Lane. Handily driving off the militia, Jesup pulled his men back into the woodline. Hundreds of wounded British soldiers, including General Riall himself, were captured as they passed through the intersection heading to the rear. The first phase of the battle ended with Scott's Brigade thoroughly shot up, yet nailed to its battle line in bold defiance.

When they heard the sounds of gunfire, Generals Brown, Ripley, and Porter sprang into action. The two brigade commanders and Major Jacob Hindman, who commanded the artillery, ordered their troops to form. Hundreds of soldiers were elsewhere guarding supplies or foraging. Brown ordered the available troops northward, marching on the Portage Road. Brown received reinforcements from an unexpected source. Marching into camp came Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nicholas and 150 soldiers of the 1st US Infantry. These men had spent the previous months sailing and walking from St. Louis.

Brown arrived on the battlefield to see Scott's diminished command and hundreds of dead, wounded, and stragglers. He also saw opportunity. Finally, he had the British in the open. As Ripley's Second Brigade arrived, Brown ordered them to form line between

Scott's soldiers and the British. The 1st Infantry formed on the left, Colonel James Miller's 21st Infantry was in the center, and Major Daniel McFarland's 23d Infantry was on the right centered on Portage Road. Brown well understood that the British guns on the crest of the low ridge were the key to the enemy's defense. He ordered Ripley's Brigade to assault in the darkness. Miller would attack the guns directly while Nicholas and McFarland would protect the flanks of the 21st Infantry.

With the regiments forming for attack in the dark, out of sight of one another and with no agreed upon signal to begin the advance, there was every reason to believe that the assault would miscarry. It nearly did. On the left, the 1st Infantry, no more than 150 soldiers strong, stepped off before the others. It drew heavy artillery and musket fire and recoiled down the slope. Moments later, McFarland's men on the far right advanced to within about 150 yards of the enemy when they received a volley of musketry. The attack by the 23d faltered. Undaunted, McFarland and his officers tried again. This time they came within 20 yards of the British and opened fire. It was the turn of the British to fall back behind the crest of the ridge, but their fire killed Daniel McFarland. With the enemy's attention diverted, James Miller led his men forward stealthily, stopping at a rail fence at the foot of the slope directly below the guns of the Royal Artillery. Miller's men delivered a murderous volley and then assaulted uphill, overrunning the artillery gunners.

As Miller reformed his men, Sir Gordon Drummond found Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Morrison to counterattack with the celebrated 89th Regiment of Foot. Unknown until much later, Miller's regiment and Morrison's had fought against one another at Crysler's Field the previous year. In that battle, Morrison's men prevailed. This time the result was different. The 89th tramped uphill and opened fire on the 21st only twenty yards away. The two sides aimed at the muzzle fire of their enemy. Often the battle was hand-to-hand. The British infantry withdrew, but within moments, Morrison had them moving forward again. This time the results were the same. Morrison was hit and evacuated and Drummond's horse was shot out from under him. Drummond found more reinforcements as the 1st and 23d Infantry Regiments were arriving on Miller's flanks. The British slogged forward a third time. The firefight was deadly, both

sides suffering grievous losses. Drummond received a wound to his neck. Blood gushing, he bound the wound with handkerchiefs and remained in command. However, the British eventually fell back in the darkness to the northern base of the ridge.

Both sides brought up reinforcements. Hindman brought his guns to the crest of the ridge and dispersed them along the American line. General Porter arrived with the 300 men he could find in camp. They positioned themselves on the left of the line while Jesup came up on the right of the 23d Infantry. Meanwhile, Drummond sent his aides to order nearly every British unit to join the fourth assault to regain the ridge line. Brown, Drummond, and their respective officers and men were determined to fight it out to the end. Phase two of the battle ended with the promise of more carnage to follow.

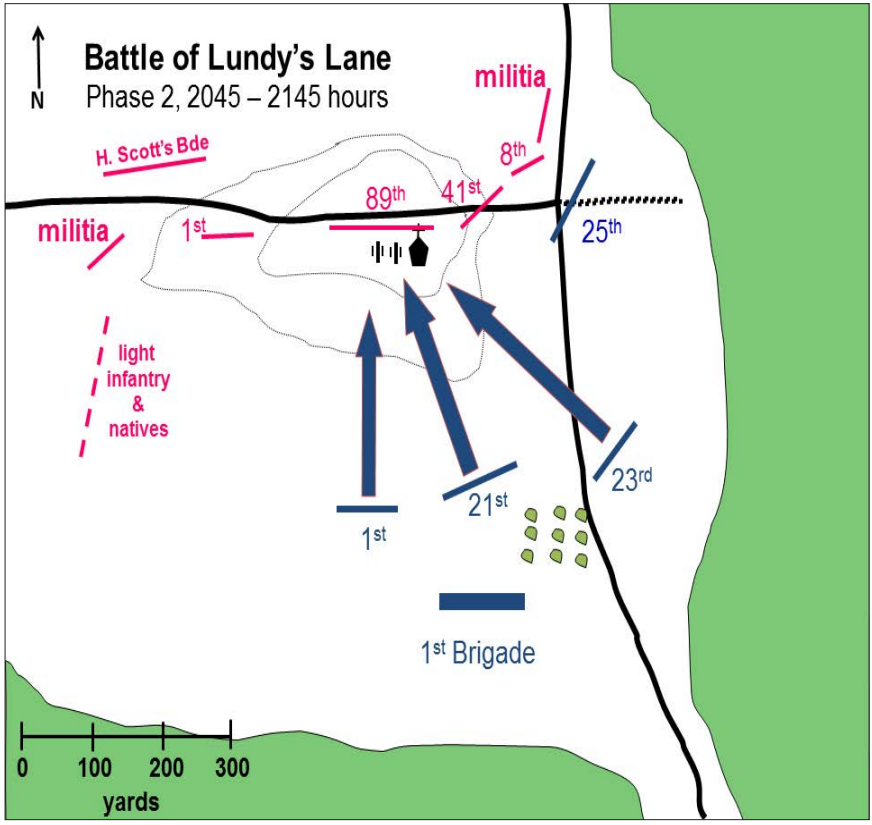

Figure 27. Lundy's Lane-Phase 2.

As the sides were preparing to continue the struggle, General Brown and his aide rode forward of the American line. Perceiving troop movement in front of them, Brown's aide called out in the darkness, "What regiment is that?" A voice replied, "The Royal Scots." The pair quickly returned to their lines as Drummond opened phase three of the battle with a determined assault.

The British tramped forward to within forty yards of the Americans. The resulting firefight lasted twenty minutes as repeated volleys of musket and grape tore through the lines. Some soldiers were so close that they reported seeing the buttons on their opponent's coats. Eventually there were too few American gunners to serve their pieces and the cannon fell silent. Ripley was everywhere steadying his men. Slowly, the British withdrew down the slope to the relative security provided by the darkness.

Drummond ordered a fifth assault. The British this time stopped further back from the American line. The volleys continued without respite. Brown ordered Scott to assemble his depleted brigade, now fewer than 250 still with the colors, to counterattack. Scott eagerly had Leavenworth form the men into an assault column. Scott and Leavenworth brought the men through the gap between the 21st and 23d Infantry. The First Brigade advanced, but unexplainably veered toward the left. Soon the gray-coated veterans of Chippawa were moving between the two opposing lines and, in the darkness, drawing fire from friend and foe alike. Eventually Scott's Brigade, their ranks depleted by 20%, found relative safety on the extreme left of the line. Twenty minutes after it started, and after Scott's ill-fated venture, the British broke off the attack, the men once again falling back.

Drummond refused to accept defeat. He did not know it, but his 3,000 men nearly doubled those left in the American lines. Both sides prepared for another attack. The thirsty, tired Americans went through the cartridge boxes of the fallen to replenish their own. Jesup's 25th Infantry was so depleted that he had to arrange his men in a single rank to cover his front. Leavenworth formed up the battered First Brigade. These men had seen more punishment in the past three weeks than any other American formation. As Drummond launched his sixth and final assault, Scott led his men forward, hoping to hit the British right flank. Unfortunately, he brought his men into the

solid ranks of the approaching British. Fire was intense, yet a handful of Americans, bayonets forward, made contact with the British, where they died. The brigade had taken more than should have been expected and Scott's broken column returned to their starting point.

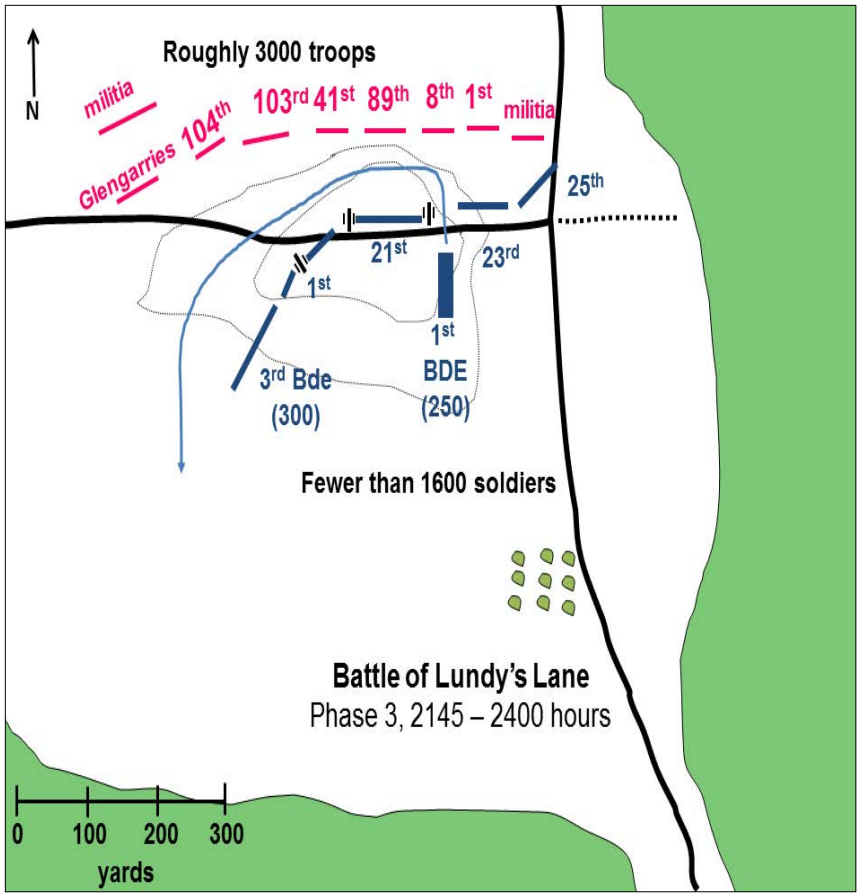

Figure 28. Lundy's Lane-Phase 3.

Leaving his brigade in Leavenworth's capable hands, Scott rode to the right of the line to see how his orphan regiment, the 25th, was faring. Scott was receiving Jesup's report when a volley struck the two Americans. Jesup received his third wound of the day, but managed to stay in the fight. Scott was hit solidly in the shoulder and was evacuated from the battlefield and the war. At about the same time, a bullet went through Brown's thigh and another missile struck his side but failed to penetrate. Brown was down, but not yet out.

Fighting on the crest was hand-to-hand, but eventually the British had had enough. The various red-coated regiments melted down the steep northern slope and the officers strove to maintain control.

There was no apprehension of a seventh attack. When Brown learned that Scott was gone from the battlefield, he was reluctant to turn command over to Ripley. Nonetheless, Brown gave orders to evacuate the wounded and the captured British guns. Unfortunately, there were insufficient horses to drag off the captured artillery pieces. Thus, the prized British guns, a tangible sign of victory, were left in place. Before being treated himself, Brown gave orders to Ripley to bring the men back to camp, replenish water and ammunition, and return to the crest of the ridge no later than dawn. Ripley gave the orders to return to camp, but did not convey the order to return to the battlefield. The next morning, when the wounded Brown received reports that the army was still in camp, he ordered the men to march. He was furious with Ripley's disobedience. At about 0900 Ripley was back in the meadow below the ridgeline that had seen such fierce fighting only hours before. There atop the high ground proudly stood the British Right Division. Outnumbered and in daylight, there was no hope of a successful attack. Ripley and Porter brought the diminished Left Division back to camp. As Brown was evacuated to the hospital in Williamsville, he sent orders to Gaines at Sackett's Harbor to take command.

How many troops were actively engaged in the battle? The best estimates are that Drummond commanded a total of about 3600 on the battlefield, while Brown had approximately 2800. Casualties between the two sides were very evenly split. The Left Division lost a total of 861 soldiers (173 killed, 571 wounded, and 117 missing or prisoners). Drummond's Right Division suffered a loss of 878 (84 killed, 559 wounded, and 235 missing or prisoner). Every general officer except two, Ripley and Porter, were wounded. Ripley's cloak had two musket ball holes in it as evidence of his proximity to the fierce fighting.

Who won the Battle of Lundy's Lane? Both sides claimed victory. At the end of the fighting, the Americans were in command of the ridge while the British had withdrawn. Both Brown and Drummond expected to continue the fight the following day. As it turned out, the British repossessed the high ground because Ripley failed to

issue the necessary orders to return to the battlefield by dawn. There is clear evidence that the Americans outfought their adversary on 25 July. Although outnumbered, they repelled six attempts to retake the high ground. However, Ripley's precipitate retreat to Fort Erie in the following days was a turning point in the campaign. For the next two months, the Americans were on the defensive.

With Brown and Scott gone, Ripley commanded the Left Division, now at a strength of about 2000 effectives. Ripley took precedence over Porter, a militia general. Ripley ordered a withdrawal all the way back to the ferry site opposite Black Rock. His subordinate officers were aghast that Ripley so quickly gave up the defensible line of the Chippawa River. The general consensus among the Americans was that they had won a hard-fought battle and that there was considerable fight still in the ranks. For his part, Drummond failed to order a pursuit. The day following the battle, he had a bullet removed from the back of his neck. The British went about the grisly business of burning the dead and evacuating the wounded.

As the Left Division arrived at the ferry site, Ripley made known his intention to withdraw the division to New York. His senior subordinates protested vehemently. The men had won two battles. Withdrawal signaled an end to the campaign. Ripley relented and visited Brown in the hospital on the morning of 27 July. When Ripley made known his intentions, Brown issued a written order for Ripley to defend Fort Erie. Brown's resolution to defend a small, weak fort kept the campaign alive in its darkest hour. Brown, Scott, and a host of fine officers were gone. If the Left Division was to survive, it would have to draw as never before on unknown reserves of strength and talent.

The Siege of Fort Erie (British Assault)

Fort Erie itself could hold hardly two hundred defenders. Therefore, Ripley tasked his two talented engineers, McRee and Wood, to design and oversee the construction of defenses for the entire division. The engineers laid out a fortified camp, anchored on the north by the fort and on the south by Snake Hill, a large mound of sand. They assigned each unit a segment of the perimeter, and the men set out digging a long ditch and constructing an earthen breastwork. As time permitted, the soldiers emplaced an abatis forward of

the ditch. They then threw up traverses at right angles to the earthworks. These earthen walls would limit the destruction caused by enemy cannon balls careening along the long axis of the fort. Nathan Towson's artillerists flattened Snake Hill, and atop it they emplaced a timber gun platform. Only an abatis closed the thirty-seven yard gap between Towson's Battery on Snake Hill and the shores of Lake Erie. Defenders in the north turned a small stone lime kiln near the shore line into another gun battery and connected this new position to the fort by an earthen wall. Another young engineer, Second Lieutenant David Douglass, commanded this position. The final fortification ran from shore to shore. The rear of the armed camp was open and each night, boats from Buffalo brought in supplies and evacuated the wounded. The division surgeon set up a clearing hospital in Buffalo and a general hospital in Williamsville. The quartermasters adjusted supply lines to funnel logistical support into Buffalo.

While the Americans toiled frantically to prepare themselves for the coming battle, Drummond spent six days near Lundy's Lane preparing to fight an enemy he still believed outnumbered his division. Drummond ordered up more regulars and it would take a few days for the orders to reach the troops and for the reinforcements to travel by water to Fort George. He allocated additional vessels to bring in supplies and to evacuate wounded and prisoners to York. The American squadron at Sackett's Harbor stayed in port and did not interfere with the British effort to shift their major operation to the Niagara Peninsula. Eventually, Chauncey arranged to transport a small battalion of the 1st Rifle Regiment under the gifted tactician, Major Ludowick Morgan, to the Niagara Frontier. Morgan's men patrolled the outskirts of Black Rock to protect the supply lines from British or native raiders.

British and Indian scouts eventually located the Americans at Fort Erie. Drummond decided to give battle there. The Americans were in a precarious position. If the Left Division could not defend the earthen walls of the fort, there was little hope of withdrawing across the river to Buffalo. After a detailed reconnaissance, Drummond decided to lay siege to the American camp. He ordered heavy guns from Fort George and he sent his engineer to establish a battery that would fire artillery solid shot through the long axis of the enemy camp. Meanwhile, he ordered a strong raiding force of 600 regulars

to cross the Niagara River and to destroy any boats and supplies they might find. Morgan's riflemen and a handful of volunteers, about 240 in number, confronted the raiders at Conjocta Creek on 3 August, easily repelling them. This short engagement was perhaps the most decisive skirmish of the campaign as Drummond gave up the idea of attacking the American supply lines in New York.

Events moved rapidly over the next twelve days. Gaines arrived to take command of the Left Division and Ripley was relegated to command of his old brigade. Drummond's engineer laid out a battery in the forest north of Fort Erie. On 7 August, British guns opened fire, only to discover that many shots fell short. The British began work on a second battery, closer to the Americans. Drummond's scouts reported that the weakest part of the American defense was the gap between Snake Hill and the lake shore. They failed to see the low abatis across the otherwise open corridor. Drummond decided on a night assault, two columns to attack the northern defenses of the fortified camp, but the main attack to strike between Snake Hill and Lake Erie.

Four British guns opened a steady bombardment at dawn on 13 August. Solid shot and explosive shell rained into the camp, killing or wounding forty-nine Americans. Gaines was apprehensive of a night assault and kept one-third of his men on duty throughout the night while the remainder slept in their clothes with their weapons close at hand. At 0100 on 15 August the British artillery fell silent. Shortly before 0200 a party of native warriors presented themselves in front of the center of the American earthworks on the western side of the camp and opened fire. Drummond hoped that this demonstration would draw American attention away from the main attack. Meanwhile, one thousand regulars under Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Fischer stealthily approached the southern side of the American fortifications. Drummond had ordered these men to remove the flints from their weapons lest an accidental discharge warned American pickets of the serious threat to the back door of the camp. Once Drummond perceived that Fischer's men had entered the American lines, the British commander would launch two columns in the north to pin down the defenders.

Hearing the Indian musketry along the western side of the fortification, Fischer ordered his assault columns to attack. American

pickets fired and withdrew into their lines. Towson's artillery crews opened fire as soon as they detected the British movement. Fischer's men sped toward the supposed gap in the American defenses only to be halted by the abatis. Engineer Eleazar Wood commanded four companies of the 21st Infantry who opened fire across the low abatis. Unable to return fire or to penetrate the obstacle, many of Fischer's men waded into the lake, hoping to turn the American line. Ripley's infantry captured those whom they did not shoot. Eventually Fischer's men withdrew to the safety of the dark forest. Drummond's main attack had failed miserably.

Colonel Hercules Scott led the second attack column, 700 men of the 103rd Regiment of Foot, directly at the northern portion of the American lines. The American pickets heard the British infantry departing the forest. These pickets fired their weapons and returned to the protection of camp. American musketry and cannon fire from the Douglass battery crashed into the attackers. After several attempts, Colonel Scott's column fractured; it could make no headway. Many soldiers of the 103d moved westward and joined the third assault column on their right.

The most successful assault was led by Lieutenant Colonel William Drummond, a very distant relative of Gordon Drummond. Entering the ditch on the western face of Fort Erie and throwing up ladders, were 360 British infantry, marines, and sailors. The first attack was thrown back, but the British persevered. Drummond and his men moved along the ditch to their left and gathered below the Northeast bastion. They threw up ladders and mounted the ramparts. Here combat was hand-to-hand with no quarter given. Captain Alexander Williams and Lieutenant Patrick McDonough died defending their guns. The surviving American artillerists and infantry fell back into a stone barracks. The fight was at a stalemate as Drummond's men repelled counterattacks in the cramped bastion. Drummond led an attack to break into one of the stone buildings. He was killed and his men withdrew back into the bastion.

American artillery swept the flat grounds around Fort Erie preventing any reinforcements from joining those British now cut off in the fort. Then, a massive explosion in the bastion threw timbers and stone a hundred or more feet into the air. The rain of debris killed or wounded nearly every British attacker. There is no agreement as to

the cause of the providential explosion that broke the stalemate in the bastion. Was it an American soldier who ignited a keg of powder near the guns? As likely, a spark from a weapon ignited the gunpowder. About 100 British died in the holocaust. General Drummond recognized defeat and ordered all his men to withdraw back to the siege camp.

The next day, roll calls conducted in the British regiments revealed a total of 905 casualties in a battle lasting about three hours. American losses, in stark contrast, were light. General Gaines reported two officers killed among a total of 74 casualties. The defense of Fort Erie made Edmund Pendleton Gaines' reputation. The president brevetted him a major general. Unfortunately, Gaines was seriously wounded later when a British artillery shell crashed into his tent. For his part, General Gordon Drummond was only now coming to understand that the American army of 1814 was a formidable foe.

Secretary of War John Armstrong then made a serious strategic mistake. He ordered Major General George Izard to bring his Right Division from Plattsburg, about 4,000 trained men, to either attack Kingston or to march to the aid of the Left Division. Izard rightly resisted the order. Thousands of British reinforcements, mostly veterans of the war in the Spanish Peninsula, were concentrating at Montreal. Izard saw an imminent threat to the American position on Lake Champlain. Armstrong insisted, and on 29 August Izard departed Plattsburg on a long march westward. Fortunately for the American cause, Izard left Brigadier General Alexander Macomb in command of the small garrison at Plattsburg, about 1500 effectives and 900 sick or convalescents.

Between incoming artillery shot and shell and frequent skirmishing between the fort and the British siege camp, the Americans repaired the damaged bastion and threw up two additional bastions on the western side of Fort Erie. Some days, as many as 500 rounds of artillery were fired at the American lines. Governor Daniel Tompkins of New York, necessarily focused on the defense of New York City, nonetheless ordered 4,000 militiamen to assemble at Buffalo. Brown, still not fully recovered from the wounds sustained at Lundy's Lane, returned to Fort Erie on 2 September to replace Gaines who had been evacuated.

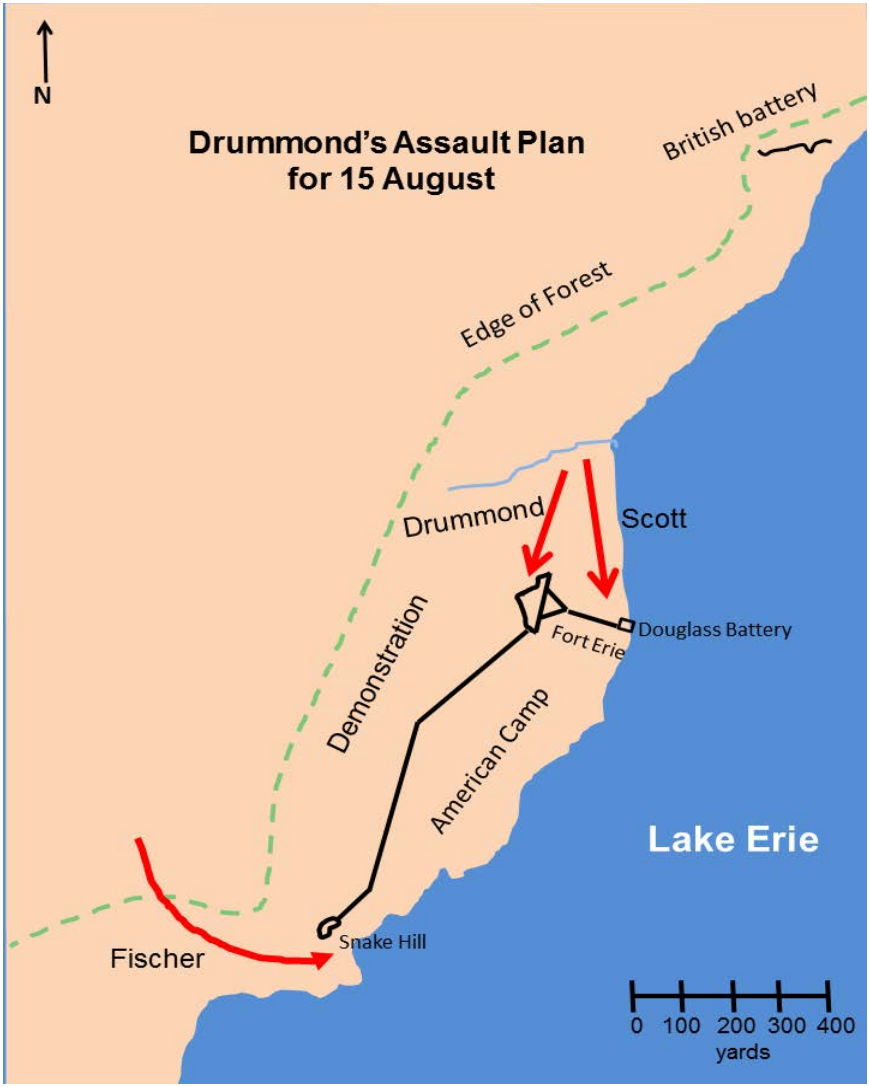

Figure 29. The Night Attack-15 August 1814.

General Drummond ordered a third battery to be built in the forest, this one only 400 yards from Fort Erie. While he was determined to defeat the invaders, he was painfully aware that the supply of food and ammunition was not keeping up with consumption. Drummond had to assault the fort yet again, or break off the siege. Both choices were unpalatable.

The Siege of Fort Erie (The Sortie)

Brown had fewer than 2300 effectives at Fort Erie, insufficient to break the siege. He badly needed the New York militiamen then gathering in Buffalo. On 10 September General Porter assembled those militia units that had arrived. In a heavy rain, he asked for volunteers to cross over into Canada to fight alongside the brave Left Division. As militia volunteers stepped forward, they offered their encouragement to their reluctant comrades. Eventually 2,200 marched to the lakeshore, climbed into boats, and rowed to an open area south of the camp. There, they threw up an earthen breastworks and prepared for action. Brown had the manpower he needed.

The commander of the Left Division learned from deserters that the British siege camp was about two miles north of the three batteries and that only one-third of British infantry were on duty guarding the guns. The remainder were in camp resting, cleaning equipment, and drying out from the incessant rains. Brown also understood that his new volunteers could not stand up to British regulars in an open fight. Brown hatched a plan to send his attackers through the forest to overrun the batteries and destroy the guns. They would then return to camp before the British in their camp could respond. Brown designated two groups to attack. In the west, General Porter would command the group tasked with seizing Battery Three. Brigadier General James Miller would lead the force in the east to capture Battery Two. General Ripley would command the reserve, tasked to support the other groups as they returned to the fort.

Mid morning on 17 September, Porter divided his attack force of 1670 men into three groups. West Pointer Colonel James Gibson commanded the advance guard composed of riflemen. Porter formed the remainder into two columns, the left column under militia Brigadier General Daniel Davis and the right column commanded by Eleazar Wood, the versatile engineer who had been brevetted lieutenant colonel for his bravery at Lundy's Lane. These two columns were composed of militiamen stiffened with regulars. A steady, light rain fell as Porter's men entered the forest near Snake Hill and worked their way forward. At about 1430 Porter's men appeared out of a light fog, surprising the British at Battery Three. Fighting was brief as the British either surrendered or fled. Porter's

men set about knocking the trunnions off the cannon, smashing gun carriages, and exploding gunpowder.

As soon as Miller heard the fighting at Battery Three, he led his 610 men forward to attack Battery Two. The British were ready for this attack, but numbers told. Soon, the Americans were in undisputed possession of two batteries and a labyrinth of connecting trenches. The British still in their siege camp leapt into action and soon whole battalions, 2000 soldiers in all, were on the move to counterattack. The Americans had stayed too long and the men were scattered in small units. The fighting in the forest was fierce in the extreme as fresh British troops entered the fray. The rain rendered most muskets unusable except as a mount for their deadly bayonets or as a club. By all accounts, the New Yorkers fought admirably. General Davis died at the front of his column. Colonel Gibson was cut down as well. Wood, too, was mortally wounded. Porter received a painful sword cut and was momentarily captured until a squad of militiamen appeared and saved him from his captors.

As the Americans withdrew, hard pressed by their assailants, Ripley led the reserve into the forest to extricate the Americans. Native warriors allied with the British fell among the Americans, crushing skulls with their tomahawks. Ripley was at the head of the reserve, and only twenty yards from the British, when a musket ball went completely through his neck. The general fell and was evacuated as his command slowly withdrew back to Fort Erie. From first to last, the fight lasted about two hours.

Brown was happy with the results. He was effusive in his praise of all, but in particular the militiamen. Their conduct stood in stark contrast to the common understanding of the militia's reputation for craven behavior during the War of 1812. In terms of casualties, the Americans fared somewhat better than their opponents. Brown reported 511 casualties: 79 killed, 216 wounded, and 216 missing. Drummond reported capturing about 200 Americans, accounting for Brown's missing. The British commander also reported 719 casualties: 115 killed, 178 wounded, and 426 missing. Brown reported capturing about 400 of the enemy.

The British made up their losses almost immediately as a fresh battalion marched into camp. Ironically, Drummond had already de-

cided to break off the siege before the American sortie. The weather was increasingly wet and cold and his men had no tents. Sickness was steadily increasing. Drummond broke camp on the evening of 21 September and he withdrew the Right Division north of the Chippawa River. In the American Left Division, and indeed in the country, there was no doubt that the sortie from Fort Erie had broken the siege.

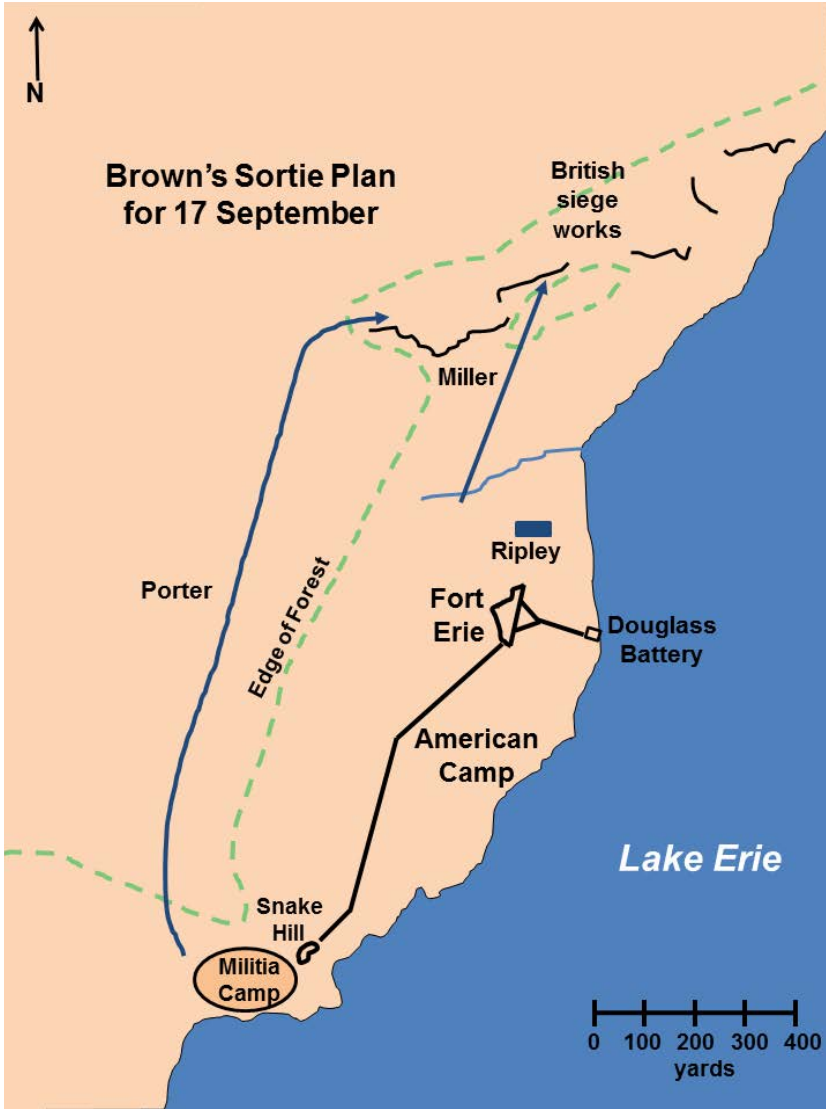

Figure 30. The Sortie Plan.

The rest of the 1814 campaign on the Niagara was uneventful except for a single small engagement at Cook's Mill on 19 October (also called the Battle of Lyon's Creek). Major General George Izard's Right Division marched into Sackett's Harbor on 15 September. This was a decision point in the campaign. Izard could either join with Commodore Chauncey to attack Kingston, or he could move to the Niagara River. There, he might lay siege to Fort Niagara or he could unite with Brown and operate to destroy Drummond's forces. A flurry of messages circulated among the three commanders. Eventually, Izard decided to join his forces with those of Brown. President Madison had recently appointed Izard to command the entire Ninth Military District, thus putting all forces in Vermont and New York north of the Highlands under a single chief. With 4,000 fresh troops and a unified command, there was every hope for a decisive victory. This was not to be the case.

Izard's division did not arrive at Fort Erie until 11 October. Brown's patience wore thin at the very slow movements of Izard's troops. The weather grew increasingly colder and time to force Drummond into a fight was waning quickly. Izard renamed his force the First Division while Brown's became the Second Division. In their outward dealings, both commanders were studiously correct. It was clear to both, however, that they approached warfare from different angles. While Izard was cautious, Brown was very willing to provoke a fight and then trust in the fighting capabilities of his officers and men. His risk-taking, he believed, had served him well thus far.

On 14 October, the Northern Army, as Izard called his two divisions, drew up onto the plain at Chippawa, where Scott had given battle the previous July. Drummond was in a strong position along the north shore of the river, as Riall had been before. Unlike Riall, Drummond refused to depart his camp to give battle to the Americans. Izard withdrew several miles, hoping that by giving Drummond more maneuver room, the British commander would join in battle. Drummond again refused the bait. On 18 October, Izard sent a brigade commanded by Brigadier General Daniel Bissell to seize a quantity of flour stored at Cook's Mill on Lyon's Creek. Perhaps a loss of food might prompt the British commander to fight.

When word reached Drummond that a force of the enemy was on the move, he sent Colonel Christopher Myers to keep an eye on them. Drummond was not concerned about a loss of food; he was prudently guarding against an attempt to outflank his position on the Chippawa. Bissell's men destroyed about 200 bushels of grain at the mill. Eventually the light troops between Bissell's and Myers' brigades found one another. Bissell followed up behind and spotted Myers' line drawn up for battle. The two sides opened fire at long range, never coming closer than 300 yards. Myers had done his job; he had an estimate of the strength of the American force. Myers withdrew toward the main British lines to report. Bissell had also accomplished his mission; the grain was destroyed. The Americans withdrew to their camp. The engagement at the mill cost the Americans 67 casualties, the British 36. The last fight of the 1814 campaign was over.

With the cold came illness to both armies. Izard withdrew from Upper Canada and put the men of the First Division in winter quarters at Buffalo. He sent Brown's Second Division on the long march to Sackett's Harbor to winter there. Porter mustered out his hard-fighting brigade of volunteers and the men returned to their homes. Izard did not feel confident that he could retain Fort Erie over the winter. He believed that winter storms would interfere with the supplies across the water from Buffalo. Work parties planted explosives deep in the ramparts and inside the buildings. On 5 November, the Americans pushed off from shore as explosions destroyed Fort Erie. Not a single American soldier, except prisoners, remained on the Niagara Peninsula. The US Army had justly won glory, but the campaign was otherwise a failure. Nonetheless, on Christmas Eve, in Ghent, Belgium, negotiators signed a treaty to end the war. The Niagara region was at peace for the first time since 1812.

Suggested Stands

Introduction

The 1814 campaign started with the capture of Fort Erie on 3 July. Two days later came Scott's tactical victory at the Battle of Chippawa. The Left Division moved all the way down the Niagara River to Fort George, but General Brown refused to lay siege or to assault that fort. On 25 July, the divisions of Brown and General Drummond fought a long, desperate battle at Lundy's Lane. The final phase of the 1814 campaign was fought out at Fort Erie, as the American Left Division prevailed over a furious and extended siege. The battlefield at Chippawa is somewhat preserved, enough to get a sense of the combat there. The battlefield of Lundy's Lane is entirely urbanized; however, the site of the British battery atop the highest part of the ridge remains. Fort Erie itself is fairly well restored to its appearance in 1814, but there is no trace of the extensive American camp south of the fort. Snake Hill is obliterated and subsumed by a housing subdivision. Thus, the stands for this campaign are few and each requires a bit of imagination to construct the topographical context of the 1814 campaign.

Stand 1

Ussher's (Streets) Creek Bridge

Directions: Cross into Canada at the Peace Bridge in Buffalo. Once on the Canadian side, Fort Erie lies about one mile to the southwest. After passing customs, pay the toll and stay in the right lane. Take the first exit marked Central Ave./Hwy 124. Turn left onto Central Avenue and drive .3 miles to Bertie Street/Hwy 17. Turn right and drive .4 miles to the T. Turn left onto Niagara Boulevard. Niagara Boulevard traces very closely to the road that existed in 1814. Eventually the name changes to Niagara Parkway. Notice the numerous creeks emptying into the Niagara River. In 1814, the British tore up the bridges across these creeks and Scott's pioneers had to reconstruct each site so that the artillery and numerous wagons could cross. These creeks were swollen from the rains, but all were fordable for infantry and dragoons at various places. Drive 14 miles along the parkway and cross Usshers Creek. Immediately turn left onto Edgworth Road. At the end of this short road, park in the designated parking area. Walk to the first stand at the Usshers Creek bridge. Use the footbridge, not the nearby road bridge. In 1814, this stream was named Streets Creek. The creek itself was probably both wider and deeper than today. The current bridge is probably very close to the 1814 site. In 1814, the creek was swollen from the rains and perhaps as much as chest deep for the native warriors and soldiers who forded it.

Orientation: The camp of the Left Division was confined by the river road on the east and Streets Creek on the north and west. Towson's battery may have been initially located south of Streets Creek and immediately to the east of the river road. Thus, it protected the northern end of the camp. Streets Creek was lined with trees and bushes that provided cover to Britain's native allies sent to reconnoiter the American camp.

Situation: Jacob Brown was observing from a picket, a company of guards positioned to provide security for the American camp, located about 200 yards north of Streets Creek along the river road. He very likely saw Porter's Brigade falling back through the forest

across the meadow to the west. Brown could not see the bridge over the Chippawa River because a tongue of woods broke his line of sight. However, he did see a cloud of dust rising above the line of trees and he correctly surmised that General Riall was on the move to attack the Left Division in its camp. Brown sent his chief of staff, Colonel Charles K. Gardner, to find General Winfield Scott and to order him to move his brigade across the Streets Creek Bridge and to give battle.

Figure 31. Ussher's Creek.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto near Chippawa, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

It was exceptionally fortuitous that Scott's Brigade was already formed up. Scott had ordered his men to assemble so that he could practice maneuvering his brigade north of the creek on the flat plain. As the regiments of the brigade marched in column toward the bridge, Brown rode past Scott and warned him that he would have a battle. Scott did not expect to find the enemy in force south of the Chippawa River; why would Riall leave the protection of his camp when outnumbered? Then British artillery rounds started landing in the waters of the Niagara and crashing into the ground south of Streets Creek. A round shot took off part of Captain Thomas Henderson's leg. Henderson stoically refused to be carried to the rear

and his men were forced to step over him. Captain Nathan Towson immediately returned fire with his three pieces—two six-pounders and a 5.5 inch howitzer.

Vignette 1: Fifteen year old Private Jarvis Hanks was a drummer in the 11th Infantry:

> We were compelled to pass a narrow bridge over a creek, near where our artillery was stationed. The enemy here had as favorable an opportunity of cutting us all to pieces as they could desire, but their balls and grape, mostly passed over our heads, and fell into a bend of the river where they glanced along for some distance upon its surface and then sunk to the bottom without having done any damage. A few men, however, were killed in passing this bridge. ("The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815," in Donald E. Graves, editor, *Soldiers of 1814: American Enlisted Men's Memoirs of the Niagara Campaign*, Youngstown: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1995, 32.)

Vignette 2: In 1840, Peter B. Porter wrote a lengthy account of the Battle of Chippawa. In it, he described the advance and retreat of his brigade in the forest. As he was rallying his men, he was positioned to view Scott's Brigade crossing the bridge over Streets Creek. He recalled that:

> Nothing could exceed the coolness & order with which Gen. Scott's Brigade crossed the bridge & formed its line under the galling fire of the enemy's artillery and the headlong approach of his infantry, who, when only 50 yards distant, were received by a thunderous discharge of musketry from the American line which forced them back for a considerable distance. (Manuscript collection, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.)

Teaching Points: Training and rehearsal, leadership.

Stand 2

The American Line

Directions: Walk back to the parking area and move north to the markers setting out the American firing line. The markers are just beyond the flagpoles.

Orientation: Look north from the American firing line. There are trees today, but in 1814, this was open meadow. The British line formed up parallel to the Americans and about 300 yards away. From left to right from the American perspective, the British line looked as follows: a battery of three guns, the 1st Regiment of Foot, the 100th Regiment of Foot, and finally a battery of three guns on the river road. The 8th Regiment of Foot formed up behind the First Foot and a company of British Light Dragoons formed on the river road behind the artillery. The British light infantry was in the forest directly to the west of the American line.

Situation: First over the bridge was Major Henry Leavenworth's combined battalion of the 9th and 22d Infantry. They formed on the right of the American line. Captain Benjamin Ropes, whose company of the 21st Infantry manned the picket where Brown first perceived the British advance, brought his men into line on Leavenworth's immediate left flank. The 11th Infantry commanded by Colonel Thomas B. Campbell marched behind Leavenworth's battalion and formed on the left of Ropes' company. The last battalion in the column, Major Thomas Jesup's 25th Infantry, was about to form on Campbell's left flank when Scott ordered Jesup into the woods to drive off the enemy light infantrymen visible in the edge of the forest. The advance of Scott's Brigade broke Towson's field of fire. Towson hitched up his guns and moved them to the extreme right of the American line where they resumed fire on the British artillery no more than 400 yards away.

The British formed line two-men deep while Scott's men were formed in line three-men deep. Thus, the American line was shorter than the British line. Scott ordered Campbell to extend to the west, thus widening the gap behind him and Leavenworth. While Riall was expecting to catch the Americans in their camp, he was not dis-

appointed to see them on the plain north of Streets Creek. Noticing the gray jackets of Scott's men, he very likely believed that he was facing militia. However, he and the rest of the British brigade could not have missed the steady American advance through artillery fire. Riall purportedly exclaimed, "These are regulars." Nonetheless, he ordered his two forward battalions to attack the American line. It was about 1630.

British practice was to advance to within good musket distance, 75 to 100 yards, fire one, two, or three volleys, and then to assault with cold steel. The 1st and 100th Foot advanced silently; the 8th followed in their rear. Scott saw now that his line actually extended beyond the right flank of the approaching British line. Scott wanted to increase this advantage. Riding up to the 11th Infantry, he found that Colonel Campbell had been wounded by artillery fire and Major John McNeil now commanded. Scott directed McNeil to throw forward his left flank, thus his fire would crash into the right flank of the British advance. Scott then rode back across the brigade to direct Towson to shift his fire from the British guns and to fire now at the approaching infantry. Towson ordered his men to load the guns with canister and to commence firing.

Before the British stopped to engage the Americans with their muskets, Scott ordered his brigade to open fire. The American volley briefly caused the British line to waver. Very soon, however, discipline re-asserted itself in the British ranks. The British stopped and fired their first volley. Dense clouds of white smoke formed between the opposing brigades, limiting the vision of the warriors. As men dropped, their comrades dragged them out of the line and then stepped back into position. When a man in the front rank fell, the soldier immediately behind him stepped forward. Both combatants were well trained and despite mounting casualties fired quickly on the orders of their officers.

Upon hearing the first artillery fire, General Eleazar Ripley ordered his troops to form up in camp. Brown sent Gardner to order Ripley to take his brigade into the forest to the west of the Plain and to attack the right flank of the British line. Ripley quickly set his brigade in motion, but the soldiers had to wade across Streets Creek, fight their way through dense bushes, and then move through the forest. The battle was over before Ripley's men could come into

action. Meanwhile, many of Porter's men responded to the expanding battle and voluntarily re-entered the forest to continue the fight. Brown also sent another company of artillery into the gap between Leavenworth's and McNeil's battalions.

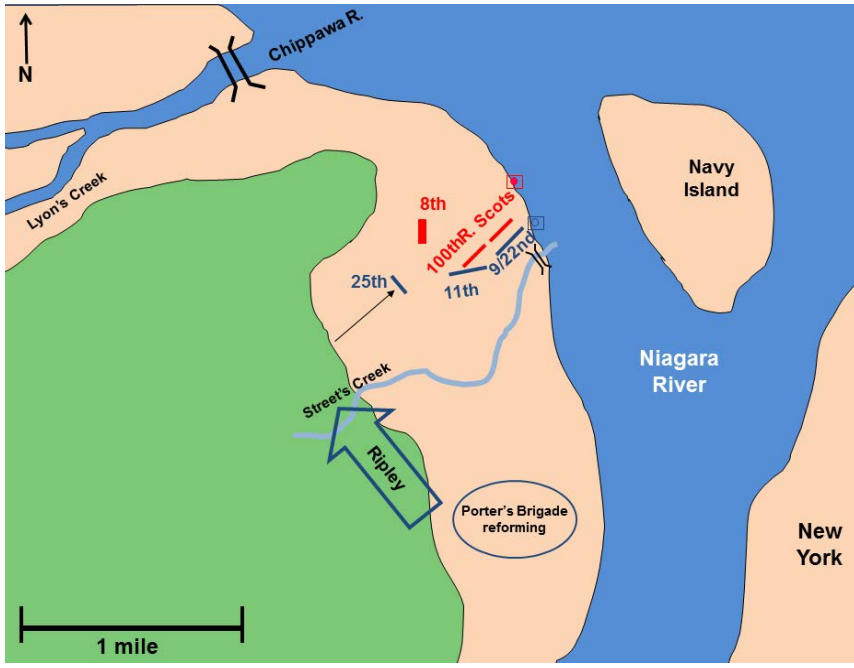

Figure 32. Chippawa Battlefield (1700).

Jesup led his 25th Infantry into the forest, driving the outnumbered British light infantry before him. However, as he was doing so, guns on the right of the British line tore into the ranks of the 25th. After dispersing the light infantry, Jesup brought his men out of the forest opposite the 8th Foot. Now the 25th Infantry and the 8th Foot opened a desperate fire fight. Jesup's attack into the right flank of Riall's Brigade kept the 8th Foot from supporting the attack against the main American line.

After exchanging volleys for about twenty minutes, the British line wavered. Riall, unable to get his troops to assault, and sensing that his men might break, reluctantly ordered a withdrawal. The 8th Foot and some light dragoons covered the withdrawal of the front regiments and guns. Scott, for reasons unknown, did not order an assault. Had he done so, it is possible that the Americans would

have inflicted even more destruction upon Riall's gallant brigade. The few British officers who remained on their feet skillfully pulled their companies back, through the defile between forest and river, and across the wooden bridge over the Chippawa River. As the last redcoat crossed, work parties dropped the planking on the center span of the bridge.

Vignette 1: Drummer Jarvis Hanks recalled:

> During this battle, Sergeant Elijah T. Bond stood still, in one spot, and fired sixteen cartridges, while I stood by his side, with my drum slung over my shoulder, and held his ramrod, instead of his putting it into his gun, when he fired, as is customary among all soldiers. By this manoeuvre, considerable time was saved, and he [was] enabled to fire a number more bullets than he could otherwise have done. (The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815, 33.)

Vignette 2: Lieutenant Colonel George Hay, the Marquis of Tweedale, commanded the 100th Regiment of Foot at Chippawa. Late in his life, he dictated his memoirs which included an account of the battle. Tweedale perceived that the American line was posted behind a five foot high "bank." This is incorrect. Both the British and the Americans were standing in a flat meadow. The high grass and fences may have given Tweedale the illusion of intervening terrain. Tweedale's account begins as his regiment advanced to attack the enemy. He referred to the 1st Regiment of Foot, The Royal Scots, as the "Royals:"

> The officer commanding the Royals and myself rode in front of our regiments and when about a hundred yards off the bank I got off my horse to be ready to get over the bank, but the fire was so heavy that both regiments came to a standstill and began firing. I spoke to the captain of the grenadier company to move forward, he was at that moment killed. I then spoke to the lieutenant, he was severely wounded, the second subaltern was killed. All I could do, I could not get them to advance. The officers were all killed or wounded and the men suffered very severely. The Colonel of the Royals did all he could to get the men to advance, he got shot in his mouth and became speechless. At the same time I got shot in my game leg that

cut the tendon Achilles in two. I could not move; they put me on a horse, we retired. There was a zig-zag pailing [probably a split-rail fence] on one side of the road by which we had advanced. I ordered the men to get over it and take down some pailings to let me through. We had just begun to form behind the pailing when a squadron of cavalry came up to us, the officer commanding desired us to surrender. I told him if he did not retire, I would order the men to shoot him and to fire upon the squadron. He retired immediately. ("Recollections of the War of 1812 by George Hay, Eighth Marquis of Tweedale," *American Historical Review,* 32 [October 1926]: 73.)

Teaching Points: Tactical expertise, discipline, leadership.

Stand 3

Lundy's Lane

Directions: Continue northward on the Niagara Parkway crossing the bridge over the Chippawa River. The Chippawa is also called the Welland River. The present bridge is located about 250 yards southwest (upriver) of the bridge that existed in 1814. In 1814, the banks of the Chippawa were very low, and usually wet. The north bank of the river was protected by earthworks and artillery positions, making an assault very unlikely to succeed. Today, the largest part of the village of Chippawa lies south of the river; in 1814 the opposite held true. Once across the bridge, the scenic parkway turns right and takes the visitor along the picturesque banks of the Niagara River directly to Niagara Falls. Proceeding north, one can access Lundy's Lane by turning left/west on Clifton Hill Road. Another left onto Victoria Avenue brings the visitor to Lundy's Lane. Note that east of Main Street, Lundy's Lane becomes Ferry Street.

The staff rider, however, can cross the Chippawa Bridge and continue straight ahead on Portage Road. This street is very close to that taken by Scott's Brigade. Drive past Marineland, an amusement park on the left of Portage Road. Enter the city of Niagara Falls, a dense urban and tourist area. Drive about one mile. Portage Road takes a hard left turn in the vicinity of the Minolta Tower. At the next intersection, follow the signs to Main Street, turning right/north. This intersection is very near the location of Willson's Tavern.

Follow Main Street for approximately one-half mile. The intersection of Culp Street on the left is approximately where Scott ordered his brigade to form line to the west of the Portage Road (present Main Street). Towson set up his guns very near this intersection. Continue about 500 yards to cross Lundy's Lane. Lundy's Lane is a dense commercial, retail, and tourist location. In 1814, it was a sunken tree-lined dirt road. The ridge was marked by a small cemetery and a log meetinghouse. Turning right and traveling about one-tenth of a mile leads to the Niagara Falls History Museum on the right. Turning left leads to a cemetery on the left. This is Drummond Hill Cemetery, burial ground of many whose bodies were not cremated the day following the battle. Drive past the cemetery and

turn left on Drummond Road. Take the next left onto Buckner Place and park. There is a gate here leading directly into the cemetery. Walk uphill to the highest point of land marked by a monument and a cannon to the east of the church. This route traces the path of Colonel James Miller's 21st Infantry as it assaulted the British artillery battery along the ridgeline. Near the monument note the grave of Captain Abraham Hull and several unknown American soldiers. The unknown soldiers were not cremated after the battle. Their remains were discovered much later and reinterred with military honors.

Figure 33. Drummond Monument.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

Orientation: Examine the high point of the battlefield next to the current church. Notice that the southern slope is much gentler than the northern slope. The British counterattacks, coming from the north, had to climb the steeper incline to close with the Ameri-

cans atop the ridge. Look south across the cemetery. The view is urban terrain; none of the battlefield outside of the cemetery has been preserved. In 1814, the battlefield was an open meadow stretching for about 600 yards to the south. The guns were the focal point of Miller's famous charge that seized the high ground and prompted repeated British counterattacks.

Before examining the battle site in Drummond Hill Cemetery, however, consider visiting the Niagara Falls History Museum nearby. Drive east on Lundy's Lane past Main Street. Lundy's Lane becomes Ferry Street. The museum is one-tenth of a mile east of Main Street on the south side of Ferry Street. Parking is available south of the museum on Sylvia Place. The museum has one floor devoted to the War of 1812 and the Battle of Lundy's Lane. An upper floor is devoted to local history.

Situation 1: Scott stopped at Willson's Tavern long enough to question the American-born proprietor, who provided information that had been quite accurate earlier that day, before Drummond ordered his division to concentrate. Thinking he was confronted by only 1100 regulars and militiamen and two guns, Scott gathered his regimental commanders and ordered an attack. He sent word back to Brown that he was attacking a body of enemy. However, Scott failed to personally reconnoiter the battlefield. Unknown to the tavern owner, the British had reinforced their position atop Lundy's Lane considerably. Scott directed Jesup to take the 25th Infantry into the woods to the east of the Portage Road and to attack north. He ordered his other three regimental commanders to continue along the road through the woods and upon exiting the woods, to form line to the left of the Portage Road.

Vignette: Scott marched his brigade along the Portage Road through a wood that opened onto a wide meadow. Drummer Hanks of the 11th Infantry recalled:

> When that part of the column in which I was situated had arrived within half a mile of the scene of action, we heard the firing commence, and saw some of the cavalry returning wounded, and heard the savage yell of the British Indians. I remember, a trumpeter was riding back, furiously, wounded, with the blood streaming, profusely down his temples & cheeks. As I

> was also a musician, I felt much alarmed for my own safety, not knowing but I should be in as bad or a worse situation in a few minutes. There was no stopping, nor escape, into battle we must go. In coming in sight of the enemy we found his position as described above, and formed our line under his fire, both of cannon and small arms. There was a small piece of wood, thro' which we passed to gain the open field where the battle was fought. A rail fence divided the field from the wood. Over this fence the soldiers were obliged to climb to obtain their places in the line. Many of them were shot and fell from the top of the fence, killed and wounded. The cannon balls, grape shot, & musket balls flew like hailstones, and yet we were not firing a gun. As soon as the men got their places in the line then they began to return the fire. ("The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815," 35.)

Situation 2: As the Americans exited the woods, Scott formed a firing line. From left to right stood John McNeil's 11th Infantry, Colonel Hugh Brady's 22d, and Henry Leavenworth's 9th. Towson's battery, two six-pounders and a howitzer, was on the right of the line, along the Portage Road. As the Americans formed up, five guns of the Royal Artillery opened fire. Being on higher ground, the British guns had more range than their American counterparts. Additionally, the low flight of the ball sent it bouncing through the American lines. Towson's guns, firing in an arc to reach the higher target, tended to plunge their shot into the ground, making the fire less effective.

Once the Americans had formed a brigade line, Scott ordered them to open fire. The range was extensive, and it is improbable that the American musketry inflicted many casualties. General Drummond sent the Glengarry Light Infantry, skilled forest fighters, to the left of the American line where they fired from behind cover at the 11th Infantry out in the open. Major McNeil was wounded early in the fight and taken to the rear. Colonel Brady was likewise wounded, but remained on his horse lending moral support to his men.

Vignette 1: Scott's Brigade was cut up by British artillery and musketry. Drummer Hanks recalled:

> Every regiment has a stand of colors consisting of two flags. The 11th to which I belonged had one painted on blue and one on yellow silk. Sometimes they were both taken to the field, and sometimes only one. It is one of the first objects of contending armies to break the centres of regiments and lines and thus throw them into confusion. This is done as effectively as any other way by aiming at the colors, which are stationed in the centre of their respective regiments.

Hanks was positioned with the other drummers behind the color party. He continued:

> During this engagement, nine different persons were shot down, under this flag, successively. At last, this Sergeant Festus Thompson took it and threw its folds to the breeze. He was wounded in the hip, and the staff was severed into splinters in his hand. But he again grasped it by the stump, and waved it triumphantly over his own, and his fellow soldiers' heads, until the close of the battle. ("The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815," 37.)

Vignette 2: After the battle, Henry Leavenworth composed his recollections. This extract takes up the narrative as Scott's Brigade approached the British atop the ridge and began firing their muskets at long range:

> Under this formation the action continued for nearly an hour when I heard that the 11th Regiment being out of ammunition & their gallant Col. McNeil severely wounded & all the Capts. of that Regt. either killed or wounded, had retired from the field. These facts were related to me by Capt. John Bliss of the Regt. who though severely wounded gallantly offered his services to me as did also Major (then Captain) Harris of the dragoons, his command being unable from the nature of the ground to act. I cannot forbear to mention that Lt. Crawford, adjutant & Lt. Sawyer, as well as several other officers whose names I do not recollect, of the 11th Regt. joined my command & rendered me very able and essential services, particularly those gentlemen whose names I have mentioned. Soon after the 11th had retired, Col. Brady of the 22nd Regt., being severely wounded and that regiment having also exhausted its ammunition shared the same fate of the 11th & many of the officers, as well as rank

> & file, joined the standard of the 9th & fought the enemy with a spirit & bravery bordering upon desperation. (Henry Leavenworth, untitled and undated manuscript. Manuscript collection of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.)

Vignette 3: Scott certainly could have saved his brigade from slow destruction, but he chose not to. In later years, Scott wrote:

> the brigade was, from the first, under a heavy fire, and could not be withdrawn without a hot pursuit. Being but half seasoned to war, some danger of confusion in its ranks, with a certainty of throwing the whole reserve (coming up) into a panic, were to be apprehended for an extravagant opinion generally prevailed throughout the army in respect to the prowess—nay, invincibility of Scott's brigade. (Winfield Scott. *Memoirs of Lieutenant General Scott,* New York, [1864] 141.)

Situation 3: While the American line was suffering from British artillery and musketry, Thomas Jesup's 25th Infantry achieved considerable success on the far left of Drummond's line. Jesup brought his men stealthily through the woods and came upon the Volunteer Battalion of Incorporated Militia near the junction of Lundy's Lane and the Portage Road. These Canadians were trained to the standards of regulars. Jesup's men fired and charged. The commander of the Incorporated Militia was felled in the volley; the surprised militiamen scattered. In the failing light, Jesup pulled his battalion back into a line of woods.

Vignette: In a letter written in 1852, Jesup explained the capture of General Riall. After Jesup and the 25th Infantry forced the Incorporated Militia to withdraw, Jesup sent Captain Ketchum forward with his company to overwatch the road junction of Lundy's Lane and the Portage Road. Jesup with the other five companies of his regiment remained to the rear protecting the right of the American position:

> In about ten or fifteen minutes, Ketchum reported the capture of Gen. Rial, with his escort. While these events were occurring, a detachment under a non-commissioned officer, which had been sent down the road towards the advancing [British] col-

> umn, captured Captain Moorson, (I believe that is the name), the British Adjutant-general, on his way with a communication from Gen. Rial to Gen. Drummond, and Capt. Loring, an Aid of the latter General, with a communication to the former. (Thomas Jesup to the Editor of Historical Magazine, dated 25 September 1852, in *Historical Magazine*, July 1870, vol. 8, 54-55.)

Jesup then ordered Ketchum to take these important prisoners back to Scott, somewhere to the rear.

Situation 4: As soon as the Americans in camp heard the sound of the British guns, they sprang into action. Porter and Ripley assembled their men and Brown and his staff rode forward to see the situation for themselves. Brown received Scott's quick report while on the road northward. Sensing from the sounds of the guns that the battle was bigger than Scott's note suggested, Brown sent word to his two brigade commanders to bring the troops forward. Upon entering the clearing, Brown saw how badly Scott's Brigade was cut up. However, he now had the British Right Division out from behind its defenses in Fort George. Brown ordered Ripley to place his men between the British and Scott's Brigade.

Lieutenant Colonel McRee, the engineer, rode close to the British lines in the fast-failing light. He reported to Brown that the British guns on the high ground near the cemetery were the key to the British position. Brown agreed. Brown sent orders to his Second Brigade to attack. In the darkness, aides found Major Daniel McFarland of the 23d Infantry and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nicholas of the 1st Infantry and passed Brown's order to attack. Brown himself found Lieutenant Colonel James Miller of the 21st Infantry and ordered him to attack the British guns directly. Miller replied famously, "I'll try, Sir."

Neither Brown nor Ripley coordinated this night attack. The three attacking elements were out of contact with one another and Ripley did not establish a signal to begin the attack. Nicholas led his 150 men forward directly toward the guns. His men drew intense artillery and musket fire and fell back. The officers quickly rallied and reformed the 1st Infantry in the dark. On the right, General Ripley and Major McFarland attacked with the 23d Infantry. The men

encountered a withering fire and momentarily halted. Ripley and McFarland brought the men forward to within twenty yards of the British infantry and delivered volleys of their own. The British before them fell back behind the ridge, but not before McFarland was struck and killed.

Figure 34. The First US Infantry at Lundy's Lane.

Source: Painting courtesy of the Artist, David Geister.

Distracted by the twin American attacks, the British gunners failed to notice Miller's men approaching to the foot of the ridge in the darkness. Miller's men fired and attacked, driving off the artillery crewmen. As the troops of the 21st established a line on the high ground, the British 89th Regiment of Foot charged up the north slope of the ridge to recapture their guns. Three times this steady battalion attacked, and three times the fire from Miller's men drove it backward. Each attack saw the British march to within twenty yards of the American line and the two sides exchanged volleys. In some places, the fighting was hand-to-hand. General Drummond fed reinforcements into the fight. During the second attack, American musket fire wounded Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Morrison, the brave and skilled commander of the 89th. During the third attempt, an American musket ball found Sir Gordon Drummond. Bleeding profusely from the neck, Drummond tied handkerchiefs over the wound and continued to command. In a lull in the fighting, Drummond planned and ordered an all-out attack on the American lines forming across the ridge.

Vignette 1: Three days after the battle, James Miller wrote a letter relating the attack on the guns and the British counterattack:

> We advanced upon the mouths of their pieces of cannon. It happened there was an old rail fence on the side where we approached undiscovered by the enemy, with a small growth of shrubbery by the fence and within less than two rods of the cannon's mouth. I then very cautiously ordered my men to rest across the fence, take good aim, fire, and rush, which was done in style. Not one man at the cannons was left to put fire to them. We got into the centre of their park before they had time to oppose us. A British line was formed and lying in a strong position to protect their artillery. The moment we got to the centre they opened a most destructive fire on us, killed a great many and attempted to charge with their bayonets. We returned the fire so warmly they were compelled to stand. We fought hand to hand for some time, so close that the blaze of our guns crossed each other, but we compelled them to abandon their whole artillery, ammunition, wagons, and all, amounting to seven pieces of elegant brass cannon.... The British made two more attempts to charge us at close quarters, both of which we repulsed before

I was reinforced. (James Miller to an unknown addressee, 28 July 1814.)

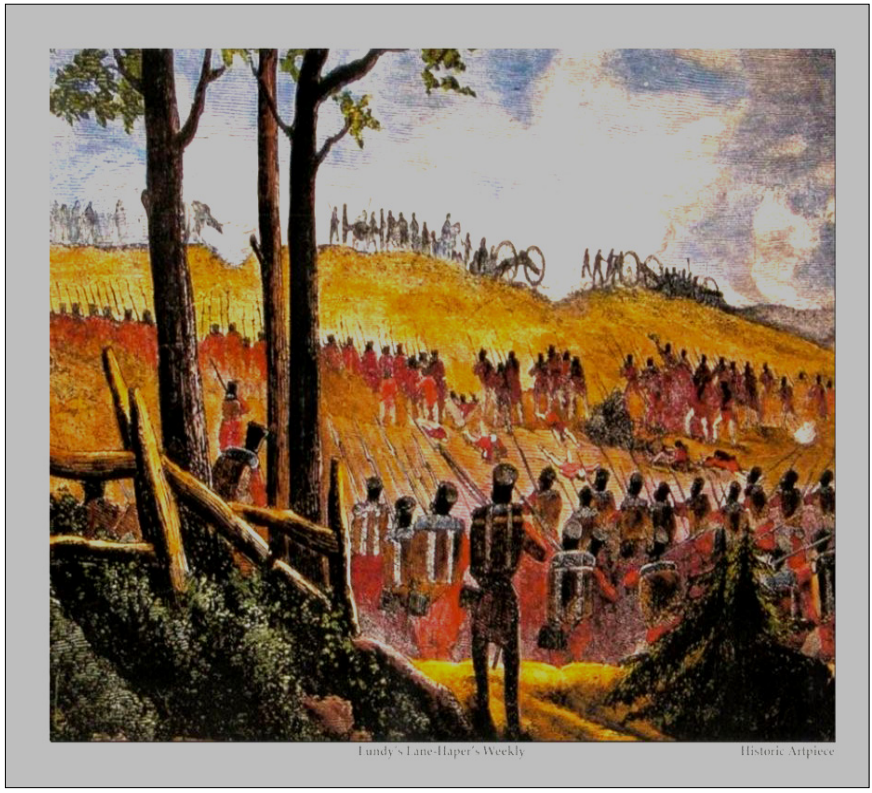

Figure 35. The Battle of Lundy's Lane.

Source: Artist unknown, publication date 1866.

Vignette 2: Once Miller's men captured the British guns, they remained in American hands until the British returned the following morning. However, General Drummond in his official report blurred events and minimized the American accomplishment:

> Of so determined a character were their attacks directed against our guns, that our artillery men were bayoneted by the enemy in the act of loading, and the muzzles of the enemy's guns were advanced within a few yards of ours. The darkness of the night during this extraordinary conflict occasioned several uncommon incidents. Our troops having for a moment been pushed back, some of our guns for a few minutes remained in enemy's

> hands. They were, however, not only quickly recovered, but the two pieces...which the enemy had brought up were captured by us.... (Drummond to Sir George Prevost, 27 July 1814.)

Situation 5: While Drummond sent orders to his brigade commanders to prepare to assault the American lines, Brown, Ripley, and Porter formed the Left Division to receive an attack they believed was certain to follow. The American artillery was brought up the ridge, the individual guns spread across the front. Brown ordered Scott to form the remnants of his brigade into a battalion to be held in reserve. Scott's Brigade was in two places because Jesup's 25th Infantry was positioned on the far right of the Left Division's line. With Colonel Brady severely wounded, yet still on horseback, effective command of the reserve battalion devolved upon Leavenworth. At about 2230, Drummond ordered his soldiers, about 3,000 regulars and militia, forward.

The British approached to within forty yards of the American line. The two sides exchanged volleys for twenty minutes. Troops reported seeing the metal buttons on their enemy's coats in the flashes of musketry. Unable to close with the Americans, Drummond ordered his men to withdraw and to form for another try. Twenty minutes later, the British line surged forward and the two sides stood fixed to the ground trading deadly fusillades of musketry. So many American artillerists fell that there were too few to man the guns. General Scott ordered Leavenworth to form the 250 men of the First Brigade still on their feet into an attack column. Scott and Leavenworth led the small battalion forward between the 21st and 23d Infantry Regiments. The British regiment before them momentarily gave way. Unfortunately, Scott lost his way in the darkness and turned the attack column to the left. As it passed between the opposing lines, the First Brigade drew fire from both sides. After running this deadly gantlet, Scott brought his shattered unit back into friendly territory on the extreme left of the line. There were fewer than 200 men left in the brigade.

Having recalled his men a second time, Drummond refused to leave his guns in American hands. The battle was silent for about 45 minutes as thirsty soldiers replenished their ammunition. So depleted was his regiment that Jesup ordered his men to form in a

single rank. Finally, at about 2330, Drummond gave the command to advance one final time. The sequence of action repeated itself. The British drew up close to the American line and the two sides continued delivering volley after volley. On his own initiative, Scott launched his slender force against what he believed was the right flank of the enemy line. British musketry delivered by unshaken troops stopped the First Brigade in its tracks. The proud soldiers of Scott's Brigade had followed their commander into danger, but this time there was no going forward. Most of the men withdrew to safety; however, Captain Abraham Hull and a small band continued on, bayonets lowered, into the mass of British infantry. They were cut down to a man. Hull was the son of disgraced General William Hull who had surrendered Detroit and the cousin of famed naval commander, Isaac Hull. Hull's gravestone stands in the Drummond Hill Cemetery.

In the final moments of the battle, enemy fire wounded both Brown and Scott and these generals were evacuated. Both Drummond and Ripley reformed their commands, the Americans eventually pulling back to the camp south of the Chippawa River to get water and ammunition. The bloodbath at Lundy's Lane was over.

Vignette 1: The last American brigade to join the fight was Peter Porter's Third Brigade. So many of the militiamen and volunteers were on guard duty elsewhere that Porter estimated that he had only about three hundred men with him. The Third Brigade formed on the left of the American line at the base of the ridge. There, in the dark, they opened a firefight with a body of British on the higher ground to their front. Private Alexander McMullen of the 5th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment recalled events as that firefight ended with the British withdrawing out of sight:

> I had twenty rounds of cartridge in my box when I went to the battle ground, and when the firing ceased on examining my box I found that the last was in my musket. Cartridges and flints were now hastily distributed along the line, and our brave brigade, blackened with powder, marched forward toward the top of the hill to drive the enemy from his position there. In our march we passed over the dead and dying, who were literally in heaps, especially where the British had stood during the battle.

> When we arrived at the top of the hill we came to a thicket where an old fence had been. Crossing this disordered the line considerably, and when through it we found ourselves within a few yards of the British, who were strongly reinforced and returning against us.
>
> A death-like silence for a few moments prevailed, and both armies stood still. One of the British officers asked in a hoarse voice if we had surrendered. There was no answer to this question. He asked again. Lieutenant [William] Dick told him that we never would surrender. The Canadian company [This was a company of volunteers in U.S. service. If captured, they would hang as traitors.] on the right began to falter, and firing irregularly, the whole body fell back over the fence, the British complimenting us with a shower of musket balls. A number were killed and others wounded in this tumultuous retreat. Running about fifteen or twenty rods we thought ourselves out of danger and several of us at the request of the officers stopped and were formed into line.
>
> ("The Narrative of Alexander McMullen, a Private Soldier in Colonel Fenton's Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers," in Donald E. Graves, editor, *Soldiers of 1814: American Enlisted Men's Memoirs of the Niagara Campaign*, 73. Youngstown, 1995.)

The Pennsylvania Volunteers returned to the fight and did not falter again.

Vignette 2: Sergeant James Commins, of the 8th Regiment of Foot, the Kings Regiment, served during the 1814 campaign on the Niagara. In 1815 he wrote several letters relating his experiences. In this extract, he tells of the Battle of Lundy's Lane:

> The engagement which lasted for ten hours was the most obstinate I ever was in, the Yankees was loth to quit their position, and being well fortified with whiskey made them stand longer then ever they did. Some of them was so drunk as to stagger into our lines, but they suffered for their temerity. At last the Americans gave way and left us masters of the field making their retreat to Fort Erie, where the Indians as usual behaved ill, although we had near a thousand of them not one of them

stood to fight but fled like hares as soon as the engagement began, in fact I never saw them stand their ground. But as soon as they found the Yankees had retreated they assembled to the field to plunder the dead and dying. One of these miscreants busy in plundering came to an American that had been severely wounded and not being able to get off the man's boots threw him into a fire that was made to cook the officers' breakfast. One of the soldiers standing by and being filled with indignation such barbarity shot the Indian and threw him on the fire to suffer for his unprincipled villany and the morning light ushered to our view a shocking spectacle, men and horses lying promiscuously together, Americans and English laid upon one another, occasioned by our advance and retreat. Nearly 2000 was left on the field 800 of which were British soldiers. It was found impossible to bury the whole so we collected a number of old trees together and burned them—which although it may appear inhuman was absolutely necessary and consequently justifiable. (Commins to Davidson, dated 25 August 1815, in Norman C. Lord, editor, "The War on the Canadian Frontier, 1812-14: Letters written by Sergt. James Commins, 8th Foot," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 18 [1939]: 209.)

Teaching Points: Reconnaissance, leadership, combat in limited visibility

Stand 4

Fort Erie—the Southeast Bastion

Directions: From Lundy's Lane, turn right (south) on Main Street and retrace the route to Chippawa. After crossing the bridge over the Chippawa, turn left onto Bridgewater Street. At the T, turn right onto Niagara Parkway. Continue driving south to the township of Fort Erie, where the Parkway becomes Niagara Boulevard. Passing under the Peace Bridge, Niagara Boulevard becomes Lakeshore Road. Follow Lakeshore Road for about a mile and turn in to the parking lot at Fort Erie. The entrance to the fort is through the Visitors Center, the site of an extensive museum, gift shop, and snack bar.

Once at Fort Erie, tour the fortification, taking care to distinguish what parts of the fort existed in 1814. Also note that the fort consists of four bastions. Fortification experts may argue that the two western bastions are more precisely known as redoubts and the two eastern bastions as demi-bastions. This staff ride handbook will name all of these works bastions. Between the two stone buildings and the lake is the ravelin. The gate that enters the fort pierces the northern wall of the ravelin. An angled earthen curtain connects the two eastern bastions. The western bastions are connected by a stone and earth wall. Note that the backs of the two western bastions are opened. This is an intentional design. If these two western bastions are taken, the defenders can fire into the captured area from the two eastern bastions and their connecting wall. At the time of the night attack, the two western bastions were at a very early stage of construction and were unoccupied.

During the siege, Fort Erie anchored the northern end of a large fortified camp encompassing about thirty acres. Today, only the fort itself remains. A parapet approximately seven feet tall, fronted by a ditch, extended from the Northeast Bastion to the lake shore. The Douglass Battery, built on a lime kiln, was located at the end of this parapet. A hundred yards or so south of this northern face of the camp and running parallel to it was erected a long earthen traverse. This traverse prevented many of the solid shot fired from Battery One from bouncing through the camp. Extending southwest from

the Southeast Bastion was a long earthen breastwork or parapet fronted by a ditch and abatis. The parapet extended 299 yards to the southwest, then angled to the south for 342 yards. As this section of the parapet came to the base of Snake Hill, it surrounded that mound of sand for about 76 yards. The final gap between parapet and lake shore was covered by a low abatis.

Figure 36. View Southward from the Southeast Bastion.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Old Fort Erie, Niagara Parks, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

Because the battlefield has not been preserved, the staff ride will focus on the siege, the night attack against the Northeast Bastion, and the sortie.

Orientation: After touring the fort, move to the Southeast Bastion. The breastwork that surrounded the American camp was anchored at its northern end to the Southeast Bastion.

Situation 1: Work parties prepared the outline of the American camp in a few days, improving their field fortifications throughout the siege.

Vignette: Drummer Hanks described the use of abatis:

> The word abbatis (pronounced ab-ba-tee) is French, but is adopted into the technical language of war. The thing itself is a tree of from four to six inches in diameter at the base, with all its limbs cut off, say three feet from the trunk leaving sharp points sticking out in various directions. Thousands of these put into the ditch, around the embankments, butts down, and points upward and outward, would make it very difficult for assailants to pass through them until the assailed would have an opportunity of shooting them all down. It was impossible to pass by, or through them, as they were placed; while removing them, they could not use their arms; a decided advantage would be thus possessed by those within who by that means, would be morally certain to repel the invaders. ("The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815," 41.)

Situation 2: The constant days of skirmishing, bombardment, rain, and monotonous rations took a heavy toll on the American defenders. Eventually, the men became callous to suffering and death. Surgeon's Mate William E. Horner was in charge of a general hospital in Buffalo. He and his orderlies took in wounded every night as they were transported across the river from Fort Erie.

Vignette: In his memoirs, he recalled an instance of dark humor:

> I remember, one day, in making my hospital rounds, a patient just arrived presented an amputated forearm, and in doing so could scarcely restrain a broad laugh; the titter was constantly on his face. 'What's the matter? This does not strike me as a subject of laughter.' 'It is not, Doctor, but excuse me, I lost my arm in so funny a way, that I still laugh, whenever I look at it.' 'What way?' 'Our first sergeant wanted shaving, and got me to attend to it, as I am a Corporal. We went out together in front of his tent, I had lathered him, took him by the nose, and was just about applying the razor, when a cannon ball came, and that was the last I saw of his head and of my hand. Excuse me, doctor, for laughing so; I never saw such a thing before.' (William E. Horner, "Surgical Sketches: A Military Hospital at Buffalo, New York, in the Year 1814," *The Medical Examiner and Record of Medical Science,* 16 [December 1852]: 772.)

Situation 3: Towson's Battery was atop Snake Hill. Snake Hill, which anchored the south end of the American camp, does not exist today. However, it is believed to have been located very close to the intersection of Lakeshore Road and Albert Street. Lakeshore Road is the road between the fort and Lake Erie. Captain Benjamin Ropes of the 21st Infantry recalled in his memoirs the night attack near Snake Hill. His company was in reserve.

Vignette: The following account by Captain Ropes has been corrected for grammar and spelling:

> About two o'clock in the morning, I had that moment been relieved from duty. Genl. Ripley called [me to his] at marquee [his command tent] and ordered me to turn out my company which consisted of only thirty-two men. I answered that my men were all awake. I expected he thought it was my turn for duty. I immediately ordered them to parade. While parading I heard a dog bark in the direction of Picket No. 4 which when I heard I knew was an enemy's dog and that they were not far off. I hastened to my alarm post. Immediately the guard on Picket No. 4 fired & the alarm was given. The whole of our men were at their post which I expect did not exceed fifteen hundred & [the] enemy were about five thousand strong. They attacked us in three columns, right, left, and center. Their first attack was on our right which gave a signal for their other columns to advance. [Ropes misspeaks. The attack he recalls is at Snake Hill, on the American left flank.] Their first attack was on Picket No. 4 with a column of eighteen hundred or two thousand men who volunteered the day before to carry our right, it being the weakest point we had in camp. From captain Towson's battery to the lake was a flat rock on which we had built an abatis, as we could get no dirt to build [a] breastwork. The picket did not fire but once. The enemy advanced so rapidly that they overran the guard. At this time they came within "hail who comes there;" they answered the picket guard. We opened on them with about one hundred and fifty or sixty men together with Capt. Towson's artillery from the battery. They broke, fell back to form, which they did, and made a second attack with great fury coming so near that we bayoneted them in the abatis. Thus they kept charging and falling back, forming and charging till daylight when they fled. There was a large body of them at-

> tempted to wade in the water around the lower point of the abatis. My company acting as a company of reserve, I was ordered to attack them which did. [I] was reinforced with [Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin] Larned's company about the same strength as my own thirty-two. I do not believe any of them [the British] went back to tell the news. We took at this point about six hundred in killed, wounded, and prisoners, with Capt. Towson's battery & one hundred & sixty men of the 21st Regt. (Mary R. Cate, editor, "Benjamin Ropes's Autobiography," found in *Essex Institute Historical Collections,* April 1955, vol. 91, 105-127.)

Lieutenant Larned was brevetted to captain for his role in the night attack.

Teaching points: Field fortifications, reconnaissance.

Stand 5

Fort Erie—the Ditch outside the Northeast Bastion

Directions: Move through the fort and exit at the main gate. Turn left and move to the ditch that surrounds the Northeast Bastion. This is where Lieutenant Colonel Drummond's assault party gathered readying themselves to scale the walls of the bastion. However, first consider the skirmishing to the north of Fort Erie.

Situation 1: Look to the north and west from the bastion walls. In 1814, the open area gave way to a forest that concealed the three British siege batteries. In the days preceding the night attack, General Gaines sent troops into the forest between Fort Erie and the British batteries. British light troops responded and these engagements were bloody and largely inconclusive. Major Johnathan Kearsley of the 4th Rifle Regiment joined his small detachment with that of Major Ludowick Morgan of the 1st Rifles. Gaines frequently ordered the combined rifle battalion into the forest north of the fort.

Vignette 1: Kearsley commented on these activities in his memoirs:

> The truth is, that although no great or permanent good was to be attained, yet this enabled Genl. Gaines to issue daily an order on morning parade, which order no doubt reached the newspapers of the day, if not the War Department, setting forth the gallantry of his troops and showing that although closely besieged in Fort Erie, the Genl. was not only defending the place but constantly engaged offensively against the enemy. Thus many valuable lives were lost and the services of more lost to their country, when most needed by wounds. On the 13th of August, Major L. Morgan was killed. A rifle or musket ball, shot obliquely from the left, struck him on the left temple and passed through his head. He fell instantaneously dead, leaving no more gallant soldier his survivor. The noble little Morgan, or as he was called from his stature, had a soul as expanded and courage as great as that tenanted in the largest breast. Major Kearsley was at his side when he fell. Maj. Morgan's last words were, "Kearsley, don't expose yourself, the enemy have marked us individually and are firing at us." The next moment he fell.

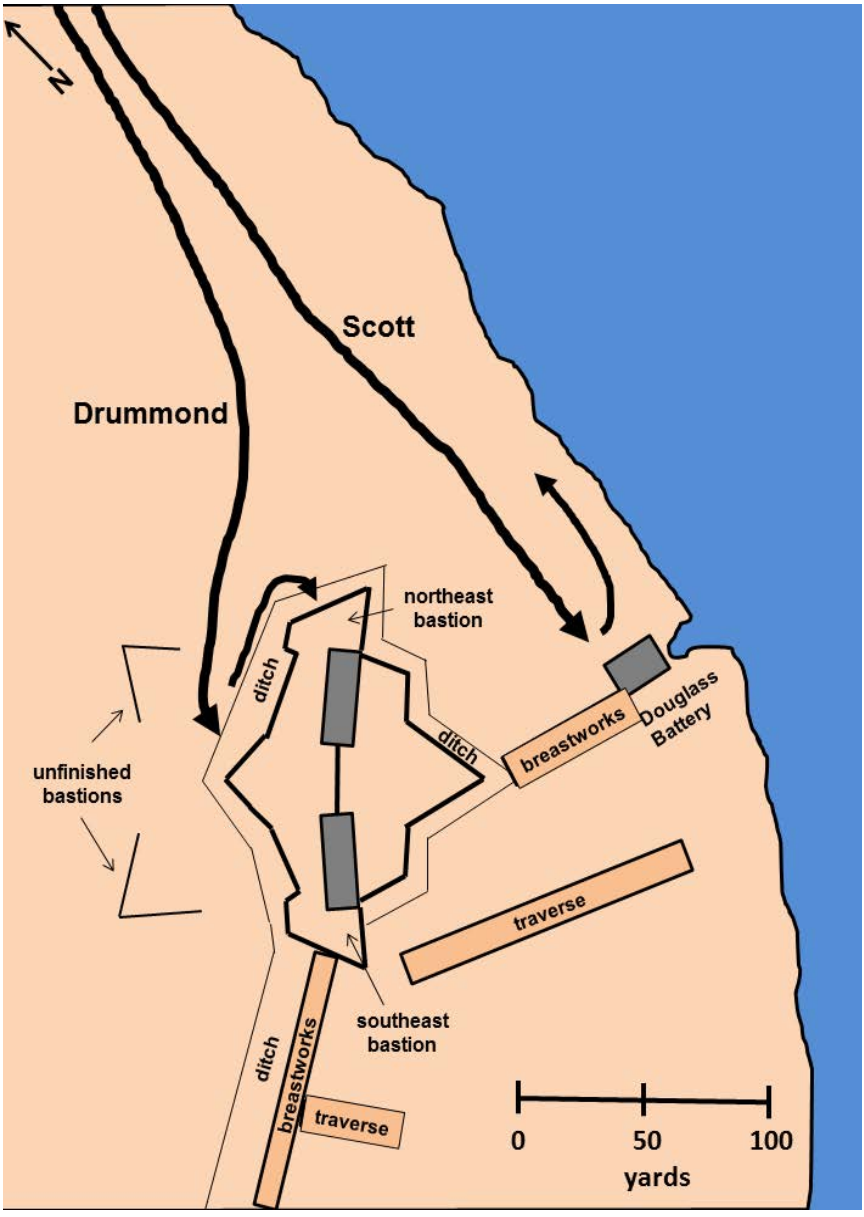

Figure 37. Fort Erie During the Night Attack.

Kearsley continued:

> When Maj. Morgan fell, he and Maj. Kearsley were a few paces in advance, as has been stated, of the line, and as it was the uniform habit never to leave upon the field a rifleman when killed

> or wounded, Maj. Kearsley instantly ordered two men forward to take up the body of Maj. Morgan; they were both wounded, the enemy being only from forty to sixty paces distant, and two others were brought forward for the same purpose; of these one was killed and the other wounded. A fifth man was ordered to the task who, with Maj. Kearsley, succeeded in taking off the bodies of Morgan and the private. Major Kearsley had five rifles in his hands of those killed and wounded, before they succeeded in securing these bodies. The reason why the bodies of the killed or wounded riflemen were invariably removed, at all hazard, was that a riflemen might be assured that under no ordinary circumstances would be left to the mercies of the Indians, or if killed, that his body would not be mutilated, perhaps his heart torn out and suspended upon a tree, as was done in some circumstances in terrorism to the riflemen who might perhaps engage the enemy the following day upon the same ground. (John C. Fredriksen, ed., "The Memoirs of Johnathan Kearsley: A Michigan Hero from the War of 1812," *Indiana Military History Journal* 10 [May 1985]: 11-12.)

Vignette 2: Dr. William Dunlop was the surgeon of the 89th Foot and was present for most of the siege. He recalled an incident from the many skirmishes outside Fort Erie that concerned the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, a Canadian unit, dressed in green like their American riflemen counterparts. The Glengarries, however, unlike their American foes, were armed with muskets, not rifles:

> In this regiment there were a father and three sons, American U[nited] E[mpire] Loyalists, all of them crack shots. In a covering party one day the father and one of the sons were sentries on the same point. An American rifleman dropped a man to his left, but in doing so exposed himself, and almost as a matter of course, was instantly dropped in his turn by the unerring aim of the father. The enemy were at that moment being driven in, so the old man of course (for it was a ceremony seldom neglected,) went up to rifle his victim. On examining his features he discovered that it was his own brother. Under any circumstances this would have horrified most men, but a Yankee has much of the stoic in him, and is seldom deprived of his equanimity. He took possession of his valuables, consisting of an old silver watch and a clasp knife, his rifle and appointments, coolly

> remarking, that it 'served him right for fighting for the rebels, when all the rest of his family fought for King George.' It appeared that during the revolutionary war his father and all his sons had taken arms in the King's cause, save this one, who had joined the Americans. They had never met him from that period till the present moment; but such is the virulence of political rancour, that it can overcome all the ties of nature. (William Dunlop, *Recollections of the War of 1812,* Toronto: Historical Publishing Company, 1908, 70-71.)

Situation 2: During the afternoon of 14 August, Sir Gordon Drummond issued orders to the three commanders who would lead assault columns in the night attack. Lieutenant Colonel William Drummond would command about 360 men and directly assault the Northeast Bastion. Besides his own men of the 104th Foot, Drummond commanded 140 sailors and marines, the flank companies of the 41st Foot, and even a small detachment of artillery gunners. When the sounds of battle at Snake Hill reached Lieutenant Colonel Drummond in the very early hours of 15 August, he started forward at the head of his men. When he was about 200 yards from the fort, the Americans opened fire with artillery and musketry. Drummond pushed on.

On Drummond's left, Colonel Hercules Scott's column had already been driven back three times from the Douglass Battery. The men of the 103rd fell back, but many joined Drummond's column later. The sailors in the lead of Drummond's attack pushed their way through the abatis and spilled into the ditch along the curtain wall south of the bastion. Raising their ladders, Drummond's men climbed to the top of the parapet, where fierce hand-to-hand combat ensued. The fighting lasted about thirty minutes until the defenders forced the last of the assault party back over the walls and into the ditch. Most of the British were now sheltered in the ditch, concealed by a heavy cloud of smoke. However, the fight was not yet over. Reinforced by the remnants of the 103rd Foot, Drummond ordered another assault. This time, however, they threw their ladders against the slope of the Northeast Bastion.

The soldiers, sailors, and marines succeeded in clambering over the walls of the bastion, defended here by only three officers

and thirty artillery gunners. The gunners were loading the cannon and their muskets were laid against the walls of the parapet. The British killed two of the three officers and all the gunners who could not flee. Drummond and his men were inside the bastion.

Vignette: Third Lieutenant Charles Cissna of the 19th Infantry defended the curtain wall. Testifying at a court-martial, he stated:

> The enemy advanced, placed their ladders and ascended them. We met them on the inside. The first charge was but a small space of time. After firing on them, we charged with the bayonet and beat them down. In a few minutes the enemy rallied and came to the second charge. It lasted...longer than the first and was more serious, in its consequences. (Testimony of Lieutenant Cissna at the Court Martial of Edmund P. Gaines, National Archives, RG 153, Box17.)

Stand 6

Fort Erie—Inside the Northeast Bastion

Directions: Reenter the fort and move to the gun platform in the Northeast Bastion. This is where Lieutenant Colonel Drummond's assault party entered the fort, killed or drove off the artillerymen, and retained the bastion until the explosion destroyed the British assault force, ending the battle. Explore the narrow corridor between the bastion and the two mess buildings. Americans posted in the stone buildings fired obliquely into the bastion. Once the American infantry along the curtain wall perceived that the bastion had fallen, they quickly directed their fire into the bastion.

Situation 1: Both sides conducted several assaults, the Americans to drive the enemy out of the bastion, and the British to enter the gate between the two stone buildings. In one of these charges, Lieutenant Colonel William Drummond was cut down at the head of his men.

The British gunners who accompanied the assault managed to turn around an American 24-pounder gun and fired two rounds. After the second shot, the massive explosion tore through the bastion ending the fight. The British who could do so withdrew across the open area to the north and entered the safety of the woods.

Vignette 1: Engineer David B. Douglass commanded the battery built over the lime kiln along the northern parapet of the American camp. From there, his guns swept the clearing in front of the Northeast Bastion to prevent reinforcements from joining Lieutenant Colonel Drummond's party inside. He recalled:

> The bastion itself was still in the possession of the enemy; but it was understood that they were not only unable to penetrate further, but that they had been terribly cut up by the fires of the fort and outworks. Several charges had been made upon them; but, owing to the narrowness of the passage and the height of the platform, they had, as yet, been unsuccessful. Another party, however, it was said, of picked men, was now just organized, with the hope of a better result. To this enterprise, then—the only thing now remaining to complete the repulse of the enemy—the attention of every beholder was most anxiously bent.

> The firing within the fort had already begun to slacken, as if to give place to the charging party: the next moment was to give us the clang of weapons, in deadly strife. But, suddenly, every sound was hushed by the sense of an unnatural tremor, beneath our feet, like the first heave of an earthquake; and almost at the same instant, the centre of the bastion burst up, with a terrific explosion; and a jet of flame, mingled with fragments of timber, earth, stone, and bodies of men, rose, to the height of one or two hundred feet, in the air, and fell, in a shower of ruins, to a great distance, all around. (David B. Douglass, "Reminiscences of the Campaign of 1814 on the Niagara Frontier." *The Historical Magazine*, volume II. Douglass's lectures appeared in three issues, dated July, September, and October 1873. The quoted text appeared on page 134 of the September 1873 issue.)

Vignette 2: Drummer Hanks was stationed at the northern end of the American camp. Later in life he remembered:

> This explosion occurred just before daylight. During the forenoon, I inspected the awful scene. I counted 196 bodies lying in the ditch and about the fort, most of them dead; some dying. Their faces and hands were burned black, many of them were horribly mutilated. Here and there were legs, arms and heads, lying, in confusion, separated, by the concussion, from the trunks to which they had been attached. One trunk I observed, deprived of all its limbs and head. ("The Memoirs of Drummer Jarvis Frary Hanks, 11th Infantry, 1813-1815," 39.)

Vignette 3: Years after the siege, Colonel John Le Couteur (then a nineteen year old Lieutenant of the 104th Foot) wrote to his friend on the loss of Colonel Hercules Scott who commanded the 103rd Foot during the night attack:

> After we were blown up, some three or four hundred men, by the springing of the mine or magazine in Fort Erie, on recovering my senses from being blown off the parapet some twenty feet into the ditch, which was filled with burnt and maimed men, the Yankees relined their works and fired heavily into the ditch. My colonel, Drummond of Keltie, had commanded the right attack, Col. Scott the left attack. Finding that the ditch was not to be held under such disarray and such a fire, several of us

jumped over the scarp and ran over the plain to our lines. Lieut. Fallon of the 103rd, who was desperately wounded, was caught by his sling belt in a log and thought to die there; however, I said to my grenadier friend, 'Jack, my boy, put your arm over my neck and I will take you round the waist and run you into the lines.' The Yankees were then pelting us with grape and musketry. As we jogged on I saw an officer carried on his back in some sort of a stretcher and I said to the four men, 'Who is that officer?' 'Colonel Scott, sir, shot through the head,' where I saw the bullet mark in the noble man's forehead. When I got my friend into the lines, regardless of who was by, in a fit of sorrow I threw my saber down exclaiming, 'This is a disgraceful day for Old England.' Colonel M., who heard me said, 'For shame, Mr. Le Couteur! The men are sufficiently discouraged by defeat.' Colonel Pearson said, 'Don't blame him! It is the high feeling of a young soldier.' To my surprise the commander-in-chief, Sir Gordon Drummond, had heard all this as he was close behind and asked me, 'Where is Colonel Scott?' 'Oh! Sir! He is killed, just being brought in by his men.' 'Where is Colonel Drummond?' 'Alas, Sir! He is killed too! Bayoneted!' And I burst into tears at the loss of my beloved commander and three parts of my men. Sir Gordon immediately gave me orders to collect all the stragglers, line the works, and prepare to resist an attack should the Yankees assault our works, which they did not do. (Extract of a letter from John Le Couteur to Halkett Le Couteur, dated 29 July 1869.)

Figure 38. View from the Northeast Bastion toward the Stone Building.

Source: Photo by Ann K. Barbuto at Old Fort Erie, Niagara Parks, Ontario, Canada, May 2014.

Stand 7

Inside Fort Erie—the Northwest Bastion

Directions: Walk from the Northeast toward the Northwest Bastion. There is a causeway leading through the curtain wall and across the ditch to the two western bastions. Explore the Northwest Bastion. Walk to a location between the two northernmost bastions.

Orientation: Civilization has entirely obliterated any trace of the Left Division's sortie on 17 September 1814. The staff rider must imagine that deadly two-hour battle using maps and a vivid imagination. Look north across the open area. In 1814, there was a shallow ravine formed by a narrow stream that passed west to east and ended at the lake shore. This ravine was about 100 yards north of the two northern bastions. The ravine was just deep enough to conceal a standing man. Beyond that stretched the forest. About 150 yards inside the forest lay an extensive British defensive work. This was a broken line of earthen parapets fronted by a shallow trench and extensive abatis. From west to east the British had built a log blockhouse, Battery Three, another blockhouse, and finally Battery Two. That final battery was within 75-100 yards of the shore. Battery One was positioned about 200 yards behind Battery Two and close to the shores of the Niagara.

Situation: A British shot entered the small house General Gaines was occupying and seriously wounded him on 28 August. Learning that Gaines had been evacuated from Fort Erie, and uneasy that the defense was now entrusted to General Ripley, Jacob Brown traveled quickly to Buffalo to see for himself the state of his division. Porter was busy raising, organizing, and drilling a large number of militiamen in Buffalo called out by Governor Tompkins. Porter used all of his skills of persuasion to prompt these men to waive their constitutional rights and to cross into British territory. Emphasizing that the beleaguered garrison of Fort Erie was all that stood between their communities and the scalping knife, and further appealing to their sense of honor and manly virtue, Porter and his subordinate officers convinced about 2,200 New York militiamen to cross over. Standing in the ruins of Buffalo, the militiamen were well aware of the poten-

tial damage to their families, farms, and communities if the British and their native allies invaded American territory.

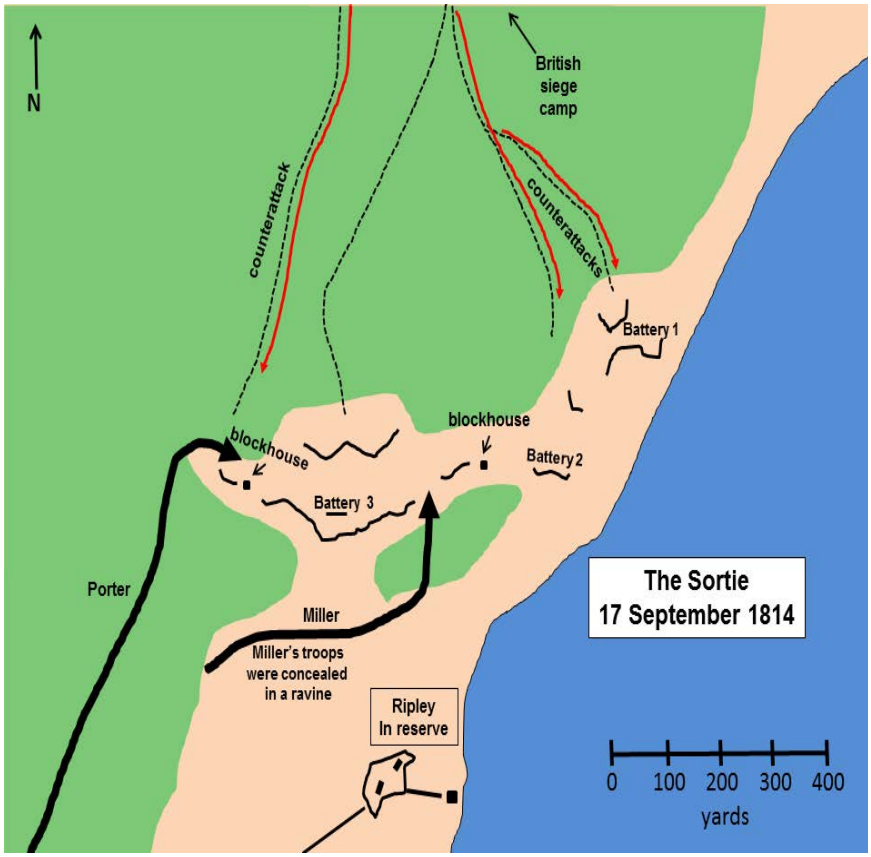

Figure 39. The Battle for the British Batteries.

Brown himself crossed the Niagara and resumed personal command of the Left Division. Learning of a third battery being erected only 300 yards from the fort, he decided to sortie from his camp to destroy this newest threat. Ironically, while Brown was planning his attack, Drummond was issuing orders to break off the siege. Drummond cited insufficient artillery ammunition and general provisions, and increasing sickness among his troops. Moving ammunition and food required all of the available British transportation assets. There were no tents and few camp stoves in the British siege camp and the rains were growing heavier, colder, and more frequent.

As related earlier in this chapter, Brown organized a main attack

led by General Porter to move through the forest from Snake Hill and enter the western end of the British siege line near the blockhouse. Brown ordered Miller to position his command in the ravine. Upon hearing the noise from the fight as Porter's men entered the British lines, Miller's men would spring forward and assault the siege lines between Batteries Three and Two. The two forces would link up and proceed to take Battery Two and if possible, Battery One. Brown anticipated that this surprise attack would wreck the three batteries before the two British brigades in their siege camp could respond.

Events unfolded fairly close to Brown's ambitious plan. However, the problems of maintaining control of the American troops in the tangle of underbrush, abatis, and trenches delayed the progress of the attack. The British reserve brigades entered the fray and the furious deadly hand-to-hand combat was costly to both forces. The fight perhaps most closely presaged trench fighting along the western front during World War I. Small groups of soldiers under junior officers and sergeants fought on amidst rain and gun smoke, unsure where the next group of enemy would appear. Officer casualties on both sides were high, attesting to the practice of leading literally from the front. Eventually the Americans managed to return to their camp, assisted by General Ripley's reserve force.

Vignette 1: Private Amasiah Ford was assigned to the 23d Infantry. In 1845 he wrote his memoirs of his service. Ford participated in the sortie. He marched in the column led by Eleazar Wood and Major George Brooke, reputedly two of the bravest men in Brown's Division:

> We marched into the skirts of the woods & in a few minutes the enemy opened a brisk fire upon us. At this instant one of my messmates, Private Woolman, was shot dead at my right side. Only imagine my feelings at this occurrence. They changed from a sense of fear to those of the bloodthirsty Wallace who exclaimed: 'the blood of Marion cries for revenge & I will repay it.' [Author's note: The Scottish warrior, William Wallace, reportedly assassinated the sheriff of Lenmark in revenge for the murder of Marion, Wallace's spouse or mistress.] We now charged upon the blockhouse from which the enemy kept up a brisk fire until they were compelled to surrender. Here we took about eighty prisoners while the ground was strewn with the

dead bodies of the enemy. We now took our stations behind the enemy's breastworks while they retreated about eight rods further into the woods behind another breastwork. We kept up a brisk fire on the enemy for some time.

At this crisis, General Ripley was shot down by a ball striking him in the neck & was carried from the field but his wound did not prove mortal. About this time I was in the act of discharging my piece at a Red Coat [when] a ball passed through my cap directly under my cockade. I discharged my piece at my mark at the same time & never saw my mark again. In this engagement we took three of the enemy's batteries, spike their cannon, broke up the[ir] arms, cut down their carriages & dropped their pieces in the mud. We then returned to the fort. ("The Memoir of Private Amasiah Ford, 23rd Infantry, 1813-1815" in Donald E. Graves, editor, *Soldiers of 1814: American Enlisted Men's Memoirs of the Niagara Campaign,* Youngstown: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1995, 57.)

Vignette 2: Dr. Dunlop of the 89th Foot was eating dinner in the British siege camp when the noise of the battle reached him:

I, like the rest of the dining parties, was alarmed by the firing, and ran to the trenches. On my road I met with about twenty of the men of my own regiment, and took them with me, being guided to where the fire was thickest by the noise. I found myself along with my friend, Mautass, a Soc Chief, and his Indians. I have had an opportunity of seeing bush-fighting in the Indian fashion. It seemed to me to be a point with them at every discharge of their rifle to shift their position, and whenever they knocked a fellow over, their yelling was horrible. I was close to Mautass himself, and whenever he performed this feat, after giving the triumphal yell, he jumped behind a tree, and seemed to be engaged in prayer-perhaps to thank the great Spirit for his success, or as likely to petition him that he might knock over a few more.

When the enemy retired, the Indians who had shown so much wariness in the fight, and had talked to me of the folly of my young men exposing themselves, suddenly seemed to lose all their caution, and bounded forward with a horrible yell, threw

themselves on the retreating enemy with their tomahawks, and were soon out of our sight; but as we advanced, we saw they left their trace behind them in sundry cleft skulls. They also, when their opponents were from fifteen to twenty yards in advance of them, threw their tomahawks with unerring aim and great force, burying the head of the hatchet up to the eye in the body of their opponents. (William Dunlop, *Recollections of the War of 1812,* Toronto: Historical Publishing Company, 1908, 76-77.)

Teaching Points: Small unit leadership, fighting in close terrain, command and control, cultural awareness.

Notes

1. There are no British sources documenting this quote. Scott states Riall's quotation in his memoirs. See *Memoirs of General Scott, Written by Himself.* New York: Sheldon, 1864. I:128-9.

2. Henry Adams, *History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison.* 9 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931. 2:45.

Appendix A

Orders Of Battle

Order of Battle: Queenston Heights

13 October 1812

American Forces:

The American force gathered at Lewiston to cross or to support by artillery fire from the New York shore exceeded 3500. The number estimated to have crossed (based on casualties and prisoners) is 1350. All the regulars except for some artillerists serving guns crossed the Niagara. Some militiamen from every regiment of detached militia crossed, but most did not.

Commander, Major General Stephen van Rensselaer

Regulars

13th US Infantry Regiment (260), Lieutenant Colonel John Chrystie
Infantry Detachment (240 from three regiments), Major James Mullany
2nd US Artillery Regiment (105), Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott
Artillery Detachment (110 from three regiments fighting as infantry), Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick

New York Detached Militia

6th Detached Brigade (914), Brigadier General Daniel Miller
- 16th Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Farrand Stranahan
- 17th Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Mead

7th Detached Brigade (1300), Brigadier General William Wadsworth
- 18th Regiment , Lieutenant Colonel Hugh W. Dobbin
- 19th Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Bloom
- 20th Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Allen

New York Militia

163rd Regiment (84), Lieutenant Colonel Silas Hopkins

Militia Cavalry (82)

Militia Artillery (71 in two companies)

Rifle Volunteers (260 in five companies)

Dragoon Volunteers (64)

British Forces:

I. At Queenston at the time of the Landing (456)

Commander, Major General Isaac Brock

Regulars

49th Regiment of Foot (200 in two companies)
Royal Artillery (6)

Militia

5th Lincoln Regiment (100)
2d York Regiment (80)
3d York Regiment (30)
Lincoln Artillery (40)

II. Reinforcements from Fort George and Fort Erie (913)

Commander, Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe

Regulars

41st Regiment of Foot (380)
Royal Artillery (33)

Various Militia (500)

Order of Battle: Battle of Fort George

27 May 1813

American Forces

Commander, Major General Henry Dearborn

Advance Guard (800)
Colonel Winfield Scott

One Company US Regiment of Rifles Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Forsyth
Captain David Milliken's Company, 22d US Infantry Regiment
Captain Daniel McFarland's Company, 22d US Infantry Regiment
Captain Peter Mills's Company, 23d US Infantry Regiment
Captain Jacob Hindman's Company, 2d US Artillery Regiment with one three-pounder field gun
Captain Thomas Biddle's Company, 2d US Artillery Regiment
Captain Thomas Stockton's Company, 3d US Artillery Regiment

First Brigade (1115)
Brigadier General John P. Boyd

6th US Infantry Regiment (300), Lieutenant Colonel James Miller
15th US Infantry Regiment (425), Major William King
16th US Infantry Regiment (270), Colonel Cromwell Pearce
McClure's Volunteers (120), Colonel Francis McClure

Second Brigade (1000)
Brigadier General William H. Winder

5th and 20th US Infantry Regiments (250 combined), Lieutenant Colonel H.V. Milton
13th US Infantry Regiment (400), Colonel John Chrystie
14th US Infantry Regiment (350), Lieutenant ColonelCharles Boerstler

Third Brigade (1790)
Brigadier General John Chandler

9th US Infantry Regiment (100), Captain George Bender

21st US Infantry Regiment (400), Colonel Eleazar Ripley
23d US Infantry Regiment (350), Major Henry Armstrong
25th US Infantry Regiment (650), Major Joseph L. Smith
3d US Artillery Regiment (250), Colonel Alexander Macomb
Captain Smith's company of US Marines (40 estimate)

US Regiment of Light Artillery (200 with 8 Field Guns)
Colonel Moses Porter

Second Regiment of Light Dragoons (150)
Lieutenant Colonel James Burn

British Forces

Commander, Brigadier General John Vincent (1134)

8th Regiment of Foot (310)
Major James Ogilvie

49th Regiment of Foot (232)
Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey

Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles (90)

Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencibles (90)

Upper Canada Militia (200)

Captain Robert Runchey's Company of Coloured Men (27)

Royal Artillery (75)

Provincial Corps of Artificiers (50)
Captain James Robertson

Grand River Native Warriors (60)
John Norton

Order of Battle: Stoney Creek

6 June 1813

American Forces:

Commander, Brigadier General John Chandler

Advance Guard
Captain Jacob Hindman

2d US Artillery (150 fighting as infantry), Captain Jacob Hindman
22d US Infantry (100), Captain Daniel McFarland/Captain David Milliken
1st US Rifle Regiment (50), Lieutenant Henry Van Swearingen
Rifle Volunteers (50), Captain John Lyttle

Chandler's Brigade
9th US Infantry (100) Captain George Bender
23d US Infantry (350) Major Henry Armstrong
25th US Infantry (650) Major Joseph Lee Smith

Winder's Brigade
5th/20th US Infantry (250), Lieutenant Colonel H.V. Milton
13th US Infantry (400), Colonel John Chrystie
14th US Infantry (350), Lieutenant Colonel Charles Boerstler
16th US Infantry (270), Captain George Steele

Division Troops
US Light Artillery (60), Captain Luther Leonard 5 guns
2d US Artillery (50), Captain Nathan Towson 4 guns
2d US Light Dragoons (150), Colonel James Burn

British Forces
Commander, Brigadier General John Vincent
Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey (tactical command)

8th Regiment of Foot (280)
Major James Ogilvie

49th Regiment of Foot (424)
Major Charles Plenderleath

Volunteer Militia (30)

Native Allies (12)

Royal Artillery (20) 1 gun

Order of Battle: Battle of Chippawa

5 July 1814

American Forces:

Commander, Major General Jacob Brown

The Left Division (3614)

First Brigade (1319), Brigadier General Winfield Scott
- 9th/22d US Infantry (549), Major Henry Leavenworth
- 11th US Infantry (416), Major John McNeil
- 25th US Infantry (354), Major Thomas S. Jesup

Second Brigade (992), Brigadier General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley
- 21st US Infantry (651), Major Joseph Grafton
- 23d US Infantry (341), Major Daniel McFarland

Note: only one company of this brigade, that of Captain Benjamin Ropes, was actively engaged in battle.

Third Brigade (926), Brigadier General Peter B. Porter
- 5th Pennsylvania Regiment (Fenton's Pennsylvanians) (540), Major James Wood
- Native Warriors (386), Red Jacket and Indian Agent Lieutenant Colonel Erastus Granger

Corps of Artillery (317), Major Jacob Hindman
- Captain Thomas Biddle, three 12-pounder guns
- Captain John Ritchie, two 6-pounder guns and one 5.5 inch howitzer
- Captain Nathan Towson, two 6-pounder guns and one 5.5 inch howitzer
- Captain Alexander Williams, three 18-pounder guns
- (Note: only Towson and Ritchie's companies were engaged.)

US Light Dragoons (60), Captain Samuel D. Harris

British Forces (2170)

Commander, Major General Phineas Riall

1st Regiment of Foot, the Royal Scots (500)
Lieutenant Colonel John Gordon

8th Regiment of Foot, the King's Regiment (480)
Major Thomas Evans

100th Regiment of Foot (450)
Lieutenant Colonel George Hay, the Marquis of Tweeddale

Royal Artillery (70)
Three 6-pounder field guns
Two 24-pounder field guns
One 5.5 inch howitzer

19th Light Dragoons (70)
Major Robert Lisle

Lincoln Militia (300)
Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Dickson

Native Warriors (300)

Order of Battle: Lundy's Lane

25 July 1814

American Forces

Commander, Major General Jacob Brown

US Left Division (2778)

First Brigade (1080), Brigadier General Winfield Scott
- 9th US Infantry (200), Major Henry Leavenworth
- 11th US Infantry (200), Major John McNeil
- 22d US Infantry (300), Colonel Hugh Brady
- 25th US Infantry (380), Major Thomas S. Jesup

Second Brigade (882), Brigadier General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley
- 1st US Infantry (150), Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Nicholas
- 21st US Infantry (432), Lieutenant Colonel James Miller
- 23d US Infantry (300), Major Daniel McFarland

Third Brigade (546), Brigadier General Peter B. Porter
- Regiment of New York Detached Militia (250), Lieutenant Colonel Hugh W. Dobbin
- 5th Pennsylvania Regiment (Fenton's Pennsylvanians) (246), Major James Wood
- Canadian Volunteers (50), Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Willcocks

Corps of Artillery (200), Major Jacob Hindman
- Captain Thomas Biddle, three 12-pounder guns
- Captain John Ritchie, two 6-pounder guns and one 5.5 inch howitzer
- Captain Nathan Towson, two 6-pounder guns and one 5.5 inch howitzer
- Captain Alexander Williams, three 18-pounder guns
- Lieutenant David Douglas's Company of Sappers, Bombardiers and Miners, two 18-pounder guns.

Dragoons (70)

Captain Samuel D. Harris's Company of US Light Dragoons
Captain Claudius Boughton's Company of New York Volunteer Dragoons

British Forces

Commander, Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond

British Right Division (3638)

First Brigade (1070), Lieutenant Colonel Hercules Scott
8th Regiment of Foot (275), Major Thomas Evans
103d Regiment of Foot (635), Major William Smelt
104th Regiment of Foot (120), Captain Richard Leonard
Royal Artillery (40)
Three 6-pounder guns

Second or Light Brigade (857), Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pearson
19th Light Dragoons (95), Major Robert Lisle
Provincial Light Dragoons (30), Captain W.H. Merritt
Glengarry Light Infantry (376), Lieutenant Colonel Francis Battersby
Volunteer Battalion of Incorporated Militia (336), Lieutenant Colonel William Robinson
Royal Artillery (20)
Two 6-pounders
One 5.5 inch howitzer

First Militia Brigade (300) Lieutenant Colonel Love Parry
Detachments from the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Lincoln Militia Regiments
Detachment 2nd York Militia Regiment

2d Militia Brigade (250), Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Hamilton
Detachments from 1st and 2nd Norfolk Regiments, 1st Essex Regiment, 1st Middlesex Regiment, and Caldwell's Rangers

Lieutenant Colonel Morrison's Force from Forts George and Niagara (761)

1st Regiment of Foot (171), Captain William Brereton
8th Regiment of Foot (65), Captain Francis Campbell
41st Regiment of Foot (60), Captain Joseph Glew
89th Regiment of Foot (425), Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Morrison
Royal Artillery (40)
Two 24-pounder guns
Congreve Rocket Section

Division Reserve (400), Lieutenant Colonel John Gordon
1st Regiment of Foot

Order of Battle: The Siege of Fort Erie

15 August 1814

American Forces

Brigadier General Edmund P. Gaines

Left Division, (2600)

Gaines divided the defenses of Fort Erie into four sectors and a reserve.

Left (620) Brigadier General Eleazar Ripley
- 21st US Infantry (250), Bvt. Lieutenant Colonel Eleazar D. Wood
- 23rd US Infantry and an attached company of the 17th US Infantry (250), Major George M. Brooke
- Captain NathanTowson (120)
  - Six 6-pounder guns

Center (955), Brigadier General Peter B. Porter
- 5th Pennsylvania Volunteers (75) Major James Wood
- Swift's Regiment (430) New York Militia, Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Dobbin
- Combined 1st and 4th Rifles (350) Captain Benjamin Birdsall
- Captain Alexander C.W. Fanning (40)
  - Two 6-pounder guns
- Captain Thomas Biddle (60)
  - Three 6-pounder guns

Fort Erie Garrison (198), Major William A. Trimble
- 19th US Infantry (118), Major Trimble
- Captain Alexander J. Williams (80 gunners)
  - One 24-pounder gun
  - One 18-pounder gun
  - One 12-pounder gun

Right (455), Lieutenant Colonel William McRee
- 9th US Infantry (185), Captain Edmund Foster

Combined Pennsylvania and New York Volunteers (120), Captain Micajah Harding
New York Dragoons (100), Captain Claudius Boughton
Bombardiers, Sappers, and Miners (50), Captain David B. Douglas,
One 6-pounder gun
One 12-pounder gun

Reserve (366), Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Aspinwall
11th US Infantry (130)
22d US Infantry (160)
Company US Light Dragoons (56), Captain Samuel Harris

British Forces

Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond

British Right Division (3460)

Gordon attacked the American camp at Fort Erie with three columns.

Main Attack (1840), Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Fischer
De Watteville's Regiment (1000)
8th Regiment of Foot (670)
Flank Companies, 89th Regiment of Foot (90)
Flank Companies, 100th Regiment of Foot (80)

Supporting Attack against Fort Erie (340), Lieutenant Colonel William Drummond
Flank Companies, 41st Regiment of Foot (110)
Company, 104th Regiment of Foot (77)
Detachment, Royal Navy sailors (90), Commander Alexander Dobbs
Detachment, Royal Marines (50)
Detachment, Royal Artillery (13)

Supporting Attack against the Douglas Battery (750), Colonel Hercules Scott
103d Regiment of Foot (750)

Reserve, (1577), Lieutenant Colonel Tucker
1st Regiment of Foot (535)

Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles (492)
Volunteer Battalion of Incorporated Militia (350)
Company, 19th Light Dragoons (100)
Detachment, Royal Artillery (100)

Order of Battle: Fort Erie Sortie

17 September 1814

American Forces

Major General Jacob Brown

The Left Division (3370)

The Attacking Force (1670), Brigadier General Peter B. Porter
- Advance Guard (200), Colonel James Gibson
  - Combined 1st and 4th Rifles (200)
- Right Column (970), Lieutenant Colonel Eleazar Wood
  - Combined 1st and 23rd US Infantry (400), Major George M. Brooke
  - Company US Light Dragoons (70), Captain Samuel Harris
  - Dobbin's Regiment, McBurney's Regiment, and Fleming's Regiment, New York Militia (500), Major Nathan Hall
- Left Column (500), Brigadier General Daniel Davis
  - Hopkins' Regiment, Crosby's Regiment, and Churchill's Regiment, New York Militia

Miller's Detachment (610), Brigadier General James Miller
- Combined 9th and 19th US Infantry (300), Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Aspinwall
- 11th US Infantry (310), Colonel Moody Bedel

Reserve (640), Brigadier General Eleazar Ripley
- 21st US Infantry (540)
- 17th US Infantry (100)

Fort Erie Garrison (450), Major Thomas Jesup
- 25th US Infantry (150), Major Jesup
- Artillery (300), Major Hindman

British Forces

Commander, Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond

British Right Division (4040)

The Duty Brigade (1200), Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Fischer (1100)

- De Watteville's Regiment (600)
- 8th Regiment of Foot (500)
- Royal Artillery (100 estimate)
  - Three 24-pounder guns
  - One 18-pounder gun
  - One 64-pounder carronade
  - One 10.5 inch mortar

The British counterattacked with three groups.

Lieutenant Colonel John Gordon's Group (700)

- 1st Regiment of Foot
- 89th Regiment of Foot

Major General Louis de Watteville's Group (1040)

- 6th Regiment of Foot (three companies)
- 82d Regiment of Foot

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Battersby's Group (300)

- Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles

British Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Campbell (900)

- 6th Regiment of Foot (seven companies)
- Flank Companies, 41st Regiment of Foot
- Volunteer Battalion of Incorporated Militia
- 19th Light Dragoons

Order of Battle: Cook's Mill

19 October 1814

American Forces

Commander, Brigadier General Daniel Bissell

Bissell's Brigade, (900)

5th US Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Ninian Pinkney
14th US Infantry Regiment, Major Isaac D. Barnard
15th US Infantry Regiment, Major Henry Grindage
16th US Infantry Regiment, Colonel Cromwell Pearce
4th Rifle Regiment, one company, Captain Armstrong Irvine
Detachment of US Light Dragoons, Lieutenant Philip Anspach

British Forces

Commander, Colonel Christopher Myers (750)

82d Regiment of Foot
Major Henry A. Proctor

100th Regiment of Foot
Lieutenant Colonel the Marquis of Tweedale

104th Regiment of Foot (two flank companies)

Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles,
Lieutenant Colonel Francis Battersby

Royal Artillery
Lieutenant Carter
One 6-pounder gun
Detachment, Rocket Corps

Appendix B

Biographical Sketches

Principal US Commanders

Stephen Van Rensselaer

Major General Stephen van Rensselaer was the unfortunate commander of US forces at the Battle of Queenston Heights. He was also one of the richest landowners in New York State and a popular Federalist politician. Van Rensselaer was the fifth generation of Dutch landlords who owned an immense estate around Albany. He assumed the traditional Dutch title of "patroon" and rented his lands out to hundreds of farmers. Van Rensselaer attended both the College of New Jersey (Princeton) and Yale. Entering politics, he served in the state senate as well as a term as lieutenant governor. He ran for governor in 1801 but was defeated. At the age of 22, van Rensselaer was commissioned a major in the state militia and rose steadily to the rank of major general in 1812.

With the declaration of war, Republican Governor Daniel Tompkins actively pursued his duties as the commander-in-chief of the state militia. Tompkins was a political ally of James Madison and supported the war effort whole heartedly. Congress authorized two major generals for the regular army and Madison gave command of the Southern Army to Thomas Pinckney and the Northern Army to Henry Dearborn. While Brigadier General William Hull commanded the expedition against Detroit, Dearborn gathered troops at Greenbush near Albany and later at Plattsburg on Lake Champlain for the advance on Montreal. Madison needed a senior commander along the Niagara River and for political reasons, offered to Tompkins the favor of nominating this commander. Tompkins well understood that van Rensselaer would likely run against him for the governorship in 1813. Notwithstanding the possibility that his opponent might garner considerable fame from a successful campaign, Tompkins selected van Rensselaer for the command. Van Rensselaer had no choice but to accept. Refusal to take command would lead to deserved charges of a lack of patriotism. However,

van Rensselaer had no military experience. He accepted this key command with the stipulation that his cousin, Solomon van Rensselaer would serve as his aide with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Solomon was a veteran of Fallen Timbers and was considered both physically brave and militarily competent.

As a major general, Stephen van Rensselaer outranked every regular officer in the state except Dearborn. Nonetheless, Brigadier General Alexander Smyth, who commanded a brigade of regulars at Buffalo, did all in his power to avoid taking orders from this militia general. The relationship was also damaged since Smyth was a partisan Republican who would have preferred that any military glory derived from the upcoming campaign would come to him and not a Federalist.

The van Rensselaer cousins and their staff worked tirelessly bringing thousands of militiamen into federal service along the Niagara River. The arriving troops were indifferently armed, entirely untrained, and lacked tents, camp kettles, and the tools necessary to build a healthy encampment. Van Rensselaer had his hands full in establishing a regular guard and providing sufficient food, weapons, and ammunition. While establishing some order to his division, van Rensselaer also ordered a thorough reconnaissance of the river looking for the optimum location to cross over.

On the day of battle, van Rensselaer crossed the Niagara to see for himself the defenses atop Queenston Heights. He gave tactical command to one of his generals and he returned to Lewiston. He correctly judged that he could best contribute to the effort by pushing more militiamen across the river. However, no amount of encouragement or threats could persuade the hundreds of idle militiamen to get into boats and join the battle. After the catastrophic conclusion of the fighting, van Rensselaer honorably relinquished command and returned to his estates. Even defeat did not diminish his popularity and he came very close to depriving Tompkins of a second term as governor. After the war, Stephen van Rensselaer remained in politics, serving 7 years in the US House of Representatives. His lasting contribution was the establishment of the Rensselaer School, today known as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Henry Dearborn

Dearborn was a career public servant, unfortunately best remembered for his indifferent command of the Northern Army in 1812 and 1813. Dearborn commanded a regiment with some distinction in several battles of the Revolution. He represented Massachusetts' District of Maine in the House of Representatives and also served as Thomas Jefferson's secretary of war. While in Jefferson's cabinet, Dearborn oversaw the diminution of the Army and Navy in accordance with Republican ideology. Thus, preparation for war in 1812 started from a weak position. Dearborn also oversaw Jefferson's Indian policies of bringing more native lands under direct federal sovereignty.

Dearborn spent the first three years of Madison's Administration as Collector of Customs in Boston. Called on by Madison to be the ranking major general of the army in the buildup to war, Dearborn at first refused. Finally relenting, he was slow to take command. He met with Secretary of War William Eustis in the spring of 1812 to forge a plan for the conquest of Canada. His plan included three invasions, a main attack to seize Montreal and supporting attacks across the Detroit and Niagara Rivers. The plan called for near-simultaneous attacks and depended upon a large number of trained soldiers, adequate supply, and Army-Navy cooperation. Dearborn warned the administration that naval power was a requirement for success on Lakes Erie and Ontario.

During the summer of 1812, Dearborn established his headquarters at the major encampment at Greenbush, east of the Hudson River and near Albany. Greenbush was an excellent choice of location as it was centrally located between the four main loci of the war in New York: Lake Champlain, Sackett's Harbor, the Niagara, and New York City. Its nearness to the Hudson made it logistically supportable. The War Department ordered newly-recruited companies and regiments to join General William Hull's army in Ohio and van Rensselaer's army on the Niagara. However, the largest number of soldiers marched to Greenbush. Dearborn was absent from Greenbush for weeks at a time and the serious task of forming recruits into military organizations fell to the regimental officers, most of whom hardly understood their own roles. The men were also employed

building barracks and cutting roads in the New York countryside. On the eve of war Dearborn remained unaware that he was also in command of Hull's and van Rensselaer's forces, an omission attributed to a grave misunderstanding between Dearborn and Eustis.

Operations in 1812 were disastrous for the American war effort. Detroit fell to the enemy and the debacle at Queenston Heights was humiliating. Dearborn's plan called for the main attack to be made against Montreal. In November, Dearborn led a small division across the border between New York and the province of Lower Canada. Most of the New York militia refused to cross the border. The regulars proceeded to march a few snow-covered miles into enemy territory but were unable to overcome the first British defensive position. Dearborn, fully aware of the extreme unpreparedness of his army and the lateness of the season, brought his men back to Plattsburgh. There were few barracks at that base and most of the men slept in tents in the cruel coldness. Hundreds fell ill and died.

Dearborn and the new head of the War Department, John Armstrong, planned operations for 1813. Armstrong wanted to eliminate Kingston as the main British naval base on Lake Ontario. Success would give supremacy to Commodore Isaac Chauncey's squadron. Chauncey and Dearborn argued that Kingston was too formidable a target (an assessment not born out by the facts). They persuaded Armstrong to approve a less ambitious, less decisive campaign. First, the Americans would raid York to capture or destroy ships being built there. Second, the Navy would support the Army in the capture of Fort George and elimination of British power on the Niagara Peninsula.

Dearborn was too ill to plan or conduct the campaign in person, delegating key roles to competent soldiers such as Zebulon Pike and Winfield Scott. Dearborn's officers generally liked Dearborn, but became increasingly aware of his several shortcomings as a commander. The men sometimes referred to him as 'Granny Dearborn.' His inability to destroy the retreating British forces after both battles and the embarrassing defeats at Stoney Creek and Beaver Dams led directly to Madison's decision to replace Dearborn as commander of field armies. Dearborn eventually commanded Military District Three, charged with the defense of New York City. He finished the war as commander of Military District One, the states of Massa-

chusetts and New Hampshire. Dearborn served as president of the court-martials of Generals Hull and James Wilkinson. After the war, he left the Army and served as ambassador to Portugal.

Dearborn was simply out of his league as a commanding general. He had neither the energy nor health to command an army on campaign. He was cautious at a time when audacity was better suited to the occasion. American forces needed inspiration that Dearborn was unable to provide.

Winfield Scott

Scott was born in Virginia and joined an elite volunteer cavalry unit after the Chesapeake Affair in 1807. The following year he gave up his aspirations as a lawyer and gained a commission as a captain of artillery. The War Department sent Scott to New Orleans where he publically displayed his disgust with the incompetence of the senior American commander, Brigadier General James Wilkinson. A court-martial suspended Scott for one year without pay. It was during this hiatus that Scott threw himself into the study of military matters. Once Congress declared war, the president promoted Scott to second in command of the new Second US Artillery Regiment.

Energetic, charismatic, capable, and eager to advance himself, Scott was determined to be where the action was. At the Battle of Queenston Heights, Scott left his artillery company in Lewiston and crossed the Niagara River. Once atop the escarpment, he organized the defenses. New York militia Brigadier General William Wadsworth, the senior officer on the heights, recognized that Lieutenant Colonel Scott was better prepared to command. Wadsworth deferred the command to Scott. Unfortunately, through the long day reinforcements and ammunition were slow to reach the Americans. Despite Scott's best efforts, a British attack led by Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe collapsed the American defenses. Scott, along with more than 900 Americans, was taken captive.

Late in 1812 Scott was exchanged. He returned to Washington where he received a promotion and given command of the Second Artillery. Scott returned to the Niagara Frontier. Major General Henry Dearborn appointed Scott to be the adjutant general of the Army gathering near Fort Niagara. Scott planned the joint Army-Navy operation to seize Fort George in May, and he personally led

the advance guard of the Army. Scott was the first American to enter Fort George after the British withdrew. He led the pursuit until he received a preemptory order to return to Fort George.

Scott remained with the garrison at Fort George until late in the year when he took advantage of his loose orders. Proclaiming that the troops at Fort George were sufficient to protect that post, he directed his artillery unit at Fort George to join James Wilkinson's division gathering at Sackett's Harbor. The ever ambitious Scott wanted to be where the action was so he rode ahead of his guns and he found the American expedition moving down the St. Lawrence River. Wilkinson sent Scott to join Brigadier General Jacob Brown's advance guard brigade. Brown's troops successfully cleared a path for the Army, but in doing so, Brown, Scott, and the brigade missed the debacle at Crysler's Field on 11 November.

In 1814, President Madison nominated a new group of generals to lead the Army in the third year of war. Brown was promoted to major general and Scott to brigadier general. Brown and Scott were fighters, eager to seek out the enemy. Brown sent Scott to Buffalo to prepare his new brigade for an invasion. Scott directed a vigorous training regimen that resulted in what was arguably the best trained, best led American force in the war.

On 3 July, Brown ordered a crossing from Buffalo. The Americans readily seized Fort Erie. Scott led the Left Division down the Niagara River, pushing back a British force attempting to slow the American advance. The Americans camped just south of the strong British defenses on the Chippawa River. British Major General Phineas Riall assumed that he was confronted by only a portion of the American division. He rashly came out of his defenses, crossed the Chippawa, and marched on the American camp. Scott's brigade was already assembled for a training session when Brown told Scott of Riall's movements and ordered Scott to confront the British advance. In the ensuing fight, Scott's disciplined, trained brigade defeated a similar number of British troops on an open meadow between the two camps. The victory at Chippawa electrified the Army and the public and catapulted Scott into national prominence.

Three weeks later, on 25 July, Scott sought Brown's consent to march his brigade toward a reported concentration of British troops nearby Niagara Falls. Without a detailed reconnaissance, Scott

found himself confronted by a major enemy force along a low ridge at Lundy's Lane. Brown's sense of honor and pride drove him to move toward the British lines although he was clearly outnumbered. British artillery fire tore into Scott's Brigade, sapping it of combat power. Brown arrived after nightfall with the remainder of the division. Brown directed Scott's Brigade into the reserve. However, as the British counterattacked to throw back the Americans who had seized the ridge, Scott brought the remnants of his command back into the battle. Before the night was over, Scott received a severe wound that took him out of the war. His brigade was a shadow of its former self, yet the men participated in the defense of Fort Erie.

After the war, Scott was brevetted to major general for his efforts during the 1814 campaign. He went on to a stellar career rising to become Commanding General of the Army. He planned, organized, and commanded the victorious Mexico City campaign in 1847. Scott ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 1852 and he devised the so-called Anaconda Plan in 1861 that ultimately defeated the Confederacy four years later. The ambitious Scott was the longest serving general in the American Army. His impact on that organization was immense and lasting.

Jacob Brown

Born into a Quaker family in Pennsylvania, Jacob Brown grew into one of the most competent American generals of the war. After trying his hand, successfully, in several fields, Brown bought a large tract of land near Sackett's Harbor and Watertown. Trade in northern New York was oriented on Montreal, not New York City, and Brown developed a deserved reputation as a part-time smuggler. As one of the social and economic elite among landowners, Brown received a commission in the militia. He paid attention to his regiment, giving it a noticeably better appearance at drill. The state awarded his diligence with a promotion to brigadier general.

Brown's responsibility once war broke out was to defend a large swath along the shore of Lake Ontario and the Saint Lawrence River from Oswego to the northeast. In October 1812, Brown was in Ogdensburg on the Saint Lawrence when the local British commander attempted to raid that city. Brown coordinated the defense, and American artillery drove back the boats before they could reach

the New York shore. Brown came to national prominence on 29 May 1813 when he was the senior commander during the British raid on Sackett's Harbor. Brown's militia scattered early in the battle and it was the regulars who fought the British to a standstill just outside the boatyard. Brown managed to bring a few hundred of the militiamen back into the fight late in the battle. Lieutenant Colonel Electus Backus, commander of the regulars, was mortally wounded in the battle and it fell to Brown to write the official report. The president nominated Brown to be brigadier general in the regular army and Brown accepted the appointment.

Jacob Brown commanded the advance guard brigade on James Wilkinson's ill-fated advance on Montreal in November 1813. Brown's troops performed admirably. Brown had the services of Winfield Scott and Alexander Macomb, two highly capable commanders. When the British challenged the American army at Crysler's Field, Brown and his brigade were well to the east and they missed the battle. Wilkinson brought his defeated division into winter quarters at desolate French Mills just across the border in New York. While many of the officers sought leave, Brown and a handful of other stalwart officers remained with the troops during a particularly brutal winter. In the spring, Secretary of War John Armstrong promoted Brown to major general and gave him an independent command and an opportunity for glory.

The dialog between Armstrong and Brown on the goals of the campaign was confused. Armstrong rightly understood that Kingston was the most decisive objective, yet his guidance seemingly directed Brown to the Niagara Frontier. Brown commanded the left division with three capable brigadier generals as brigade commanders—Winfield Scott, Eleazar Ripley, and Peter B. Porter. The Left Division crossed the Niagara River on 3 July and fought major battles at Chippawa and Lundy's Lane. Brown was severely wounded late in the fighting at Lundy's Lane and was evacuated to the hospital at Williamsville. From his bed, he ordered Brigadier General Eleazar Ripley to defend Fort Erie. Ripley was reluctant to do so, and Brown sent for Brigadier General Edmund Pendleton Gaines who was then at Sackett's Harbor.

Gaines successfully commanded the fort during the British nighttime attack on 15 August. However, he was later wounded se-

verely by British artillery fire and was sent back to New York to recover. Rather than let Ripley take command, Brown returned to Fort Erie despite his wounds that had not yet healed. Brown decided to sortie from the fort to break the siege. On 17 September, American troops overran two of three British batteries, but were forced to withdraw in the face of a determined but piecemeal counterattack. The British commander, Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond, had decided earlier to call off the siege, but to the Americans, it appeared that Brown's attack had forced the withdrawal.

Brown attempted unsuccessfully to bring Drummond to a decisive battle. Major General George Izard appeared on the Niagara Frontier in October, but he too could not coax Drummond into a major battle nor could he turn the British out of their position behind the Chippawa River. Brown and Izard were too different in their outlook. Brown was aggressive and Izard was much more methodical and cautious. Since Izard outranked Brown, Brown agreed to return to Sackett's Harbor to defend the naval base. Izard was unable to clear the British from the Niagara region and in November, he brought his division back to Buffalo where he put the men into winter quarters.

Jacob Brown was one of two major generals retained in the Army after the war. In 1821, he was appointed to the new position of commanding general, a position he served in until his death in 1828. Jacob Brown sought battle, on any terms, as the primary mechanism to move a campaign forward. He depended upon his regulars to deliver victory and they did not disappoint him. Under Brown, the American Army exhibited its finest sustained performance during the war.

Principal British Commanders

Isaac Brock

Major General Isaac Brock was an energetic, capable leader who was equally competent directing both military and civil affairs. Brock commanded the 49th Regiment of Foot at the Battle of Egmont-op-Zee in 1799 where he was lightly wounded. He and the 49th were stationed in Upper Canada in 1803 and in 1806 Brock was given military command in that province. In 1811, Brock re-

ceived a promotion to major general and he assumed control of both civil and military affairs in Upper Canada subordinate to Sir George Prevost in Montreal. Brock quickly acquired a reputation as an able administrator. As war with the United States loomed closer, Brock worked diligently and effectively in preparing his province. His biggest impediment was the citizens of the province, many of whom were born in the United States and were only lukewarm in their allegiance to the king. Brock wisely selected the most loyal, most able militiamen and focused his slender resources in training these companies. These militiamen supported the regulars and stiffened the regular militia organizations.

When he learned that the United States had declared war on Britain, Brock ordered an expedition to seize the American fort on Michilimackinac Island. The British commander surprised the small garrison, which was not aware that war had been declared. This early British victory encouraged the natives on the upper Great Lakes to commence raiding American settlements. General William Hull, who had crossed his division into Canada at Detroit, was unable to take Fort Amherstburg, and withdrew back to the American shore. Brock joined forces with Tecumseh's band of warriors and crossed the Detroit River with the intention of seizing Fort Detroit. On 15 August 1812, Brock called upon Hull to surrender, claiming that the British could not restrain the natives if Hull decided to fight on. Hull was very much concerned about the lives of the civilians in the fort, and he gave in to his fears. Hull surrendered nearly 2500 regulars and militia to a smaller force of British and their native allies. Brock's victories electrified the Canadian civilian population and stunned the American public. The Prince Regent awarded Brock with a knighthood, but the general would never learn of this honor.

Brock rushed to the Niagara frontier to prepare that region for van Rensselaer's invasion that was sure to come. Brock inspected every position along the river, encouraged the troops, and set in place a process for spreading the alarm when the Americans landed. His determination to defend the river line was transmitted to his officers and men. On 13 October, before dawn, American boats shoved off from shore near Lewiston and landed at the base of the escarpment at Queenston Heights. The dreaded invasion had begun. Brock was at Fort George and immediately responded to the sound of can-

non fire. He did not consult with his second in command, Major General Sheaffe. Instead, Brock sped off along the river road toward Queenston village. He arrived just as the Americans under Captain John Wool captured the redan battery half way up the escarpment. Brock realized that he could not leave the artillery in the redan in American hands. He gathered the regulars and militiamen around him and organized a counterattack. Brock led from the front, inspiring his men to assault up the steep slope. An American fired from close range and the bullet pierced Brock's chest very near to his heart. In moments he died and the counterattack collapsed. Sheaffe arrived and conducted a methodical attack upon the Americans atop the heights. Brock provided Canadians with a tragic hero. He was responsible for two stunning victories. Madison was forced to prepare the country for a second year of war. Sheaffe lived in Brock's looming shadow. He had neither Brock's charisma nor his ability to work with the civilian leaders of the province. Today, a massive column honoring Sir Isaac Brock towers over the battlefield at Queenston Heights, a testament to the enduring respect and affection of the Canadian people for the Savior of Canada.

Roger Hale Sheaffe

Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe was born in Boston, schooled in Britain, and joined Brock in the 49th Regiment of Foot. Sheaffe fought at the Battle of Egmont-op-Zee in 1799, second-in-command to Brock. Sheaffe had a reputation as a hard disciplinarian, a martinet. Sheaffe commanded a number of posts in Canada. He rose steadily in the ranks and was promoted to major general in 1811. Sheaffe succeeded Isaac Brock as administrator of the province of Upper Canada following Brock's death at Queenston Heights.

Sheaffe could not emerge from Brock's heroic shadow; he had neither the talent nor skill to work well with civil leaders and native allies. Nonetheless, he managed to maintain a successful defense in the face of Brigadier General Alexander Smyth's abortive crossing attempts in November 1812. However, Sheaffe's unsuccessful defense of the provincial capital at York in April 1813 proved his undoing.

Governor General George Prevost gave permission to open a

secondary naval yard at York for the purpose of building a brig and repairing other vessels. However, the defenses of York were particularly slender. Sheaffe was in his capital when Brigadier General Zebulon Pike landed a large raiding party. Sheaffe had not planned a coordinated defense of York; he had not issued sound orders to the militia and regulars to repel an attack. While a small body of regulars and native warriors resisted the initial landing, Sheaffe despaired of success. He formed a plan to withdraw his regulars to Kingston. Without consultation with the civil and militia leaders, who seemed determined to give battle as the Americans approached the village, Sheaffe gave orders to blow up the large magazine and to burn all naval vessels at the dockyard. He told the civil leadership to make a good surrender agreement and he marched his regulars away to avoid capture.

The civilian and militia leaders of York were furious at what they considered Sheaffe's abject abandonment. Complaints flowed to Prevost who passed his own list of Sheaffe's shortcomings to London. Prevost replaced Sheaffe as administrator of Upper Canada with Major General Francis de Rottenburg. Prevost assigned Sheaffe to an important but quiet command in Montreal. The government in Britain recalled Sheaffe at the end of 1813 and while he was regularly promoted, he never saw a field command again.

Sheaffe could never live up to Brock's image. His shortcomings, particularly his inability to gain the confidence of the province's civilian leaders, led to his downfall. Regardless of his important victory at Queenston Heights, his failure to defend York merely brought to a head the growing dissatisfaction with his governance.

Gordon Drummond

Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond was born in Quebec. He spent his years in various infantry regiments and despite modest combat experience, he was speedily promoted to general officer rank. At age 41 he arrived in Canada with appointment as the administrator of the province of Upper Canada, replacing Francis de Rottenburg. Rottenburg had been cautious and unwilling to make offensive movements against the Americans. Drummond was a different leader, disposed to take calculated risks. In December 1813, Drummond left his provincial capital at Kingston to travel to the

Niagara Peninsula. There, in retribution for the burning of Newark, Drummond ordered the nighttime attack on Fort Niagara. Following an easy victory there, Drummond ordered raids across the Niagara River that resulted in the complete defeat of the militia and the burning of nearly every structure on the American side of the river.

In 1814, Drummond faced his greatest challenge. He started the campaign season in May with a raid on the American port of Oswego on the shores of Lake Ontario. His goal was to cut the supply line to Sackett's Harbor and to capture the naval guns and stores suspected to be in the Oswego warehouses. Drummond's attackers overwhelmed the outnumbered regulars, who fell back along the Oswego River. The Americans were determined to protect the valuable guns, cable, sails, and hardware vital to the American shipbuilding effort, which were stored at Oswego Falls. Drummond was satisfied with the seizure of some guns and vast quantities of salt and flour and his raiders returned to Kingston.

On 3 July 1814, Major General Jacob Brown brought the Left Division across the Niagara River and easily captured Fort Erie. Brown's relentless attacks downriver defeated Major General Phineas Riall's forces at Chippawa and continued on to Fort George. Unwilling to storm Fort George, Brown backed up to his position south of the Chippawa River. Drummond rose to the challenge; he directed reinforcements to the Niagara region and sailed to Fort George to take personal command. Drummond sent orders to concentrate regulars and militia along a road called Lundy's Lane.

During this savage nighttime battle, Drummond refused to be beaten. He personally led three attacks against Brown's thin lines and received a serious neck wound. Drummond broke off the attacks to get water and ammunition and in the morning reoccupied his initial position atop a low ridge. The Battle of Lundy's Lane was the largest and bloodiest ever fought on Canadian soil. With Brown and Brigadier General Winfield Scott wounded and evacuated across the river, the American command devolved upon Brigadier General Eleazar Ripley. Ripley withdrew the Left Division to Fort Erie and there reluctantly obeyed orders to hold that post. Drummond has been criticized for his delay in following up the fight at Lundy's Lane. Nonetheless, once he arrived at Fort Erie he was determined to capture or eject the Americans. Drummond opened siege opera-

tions. His complicated attack on the night of 15 August was a costly failure. Finally, in mid-September, Drummond realized that he could no longer continue to supply his division. He gave orders to pull the heavy guns from the three batteries in the forest as Jacob Brown ordered a sortie to break the siege. In a very hard-fought, desperate, and bloody battle in a rain-soaked forest, Drummond's defenders acquitted themselves well as American militiamen made up for their poor performances of prior years. After the Americans withdrew into the fort, Drummond continued his withdrawal, which created the notion in the American Army that the sortie had broken the siege.

Now it was Drummond's turn to go on the defensive. He successfully evaded Major General George Izard's attempts to force a battle. In November, Izard withdrew into winter quarters at Buffalo. No American was left on the Canadian side of the river and the British continued to hold Fort Niagara. Drummond had succeeded in the face of a determined, well-trained, well-led American Army. Following the war, Drummond replaced Prevost as governor general. Drummond returned to Britain in 1816 where he was knighted and promoted to full general.

Principal Native Leaders

John Norton

John Norton led native warriors as an ally of the British at several battles in the Niagara region. Norton was born in Scotland of a Scottish mother and a Cherokee father. He joined the British army and was sent to Canada. Discharged there, Norton worked as a teacher, trapper, and translator for the Indian Department. He eventually met Joseph Brant, leader of the Indians of the Grand River settlement in Upper Canada. The Grand River Indians were largely those Mohawk and other Iroquois who withdrew to British lands after the Revolution. Brant adopted Norton as his nephew.

Norton was in agreement with Tecumseh that Indians should resist American expansion into native lands. This notion had only a minority following in the Grand River community. Most natives there were very willing to maintain their neutrality, particularly as their blood relatives in New York were also inclined to let white fight

white. When war broke out, Norton gathered to himself those Grand River warriors willing to fight the American invaders. He led natives at the battles of Queenston, Fort George, Stoney Creek, Chippawa, Lundy's Lane and the siege of Fort Erie. In the early months of the war, American recruits were terrified at the prospect of a massacre at the hands of Indians, and Norton's followers used this fear as a weapon. They hid out of sight and gave blood-curdling yells that were quite effective in draining Americans of their courage.

During the 1814 campaign, many New York Iroquois sided with the Americans and joined Major General Jacob Brown's Left Division. This shift in policy, from neutrality to alliance, brought the New York natives into direct conflict with their Grand River counterparts at Chippawa in July. In a particularly bloody fight in the primeval forest that bordered the battlefield, native fought native with desperate fury. After this fight, the New York Iroquois withdrew from active campaigning, but Norton led a reduced band of his Grand River followers for the next few months.

After the war, the British awarded John Norton a sizable pension. He used his wealth to purchase large tracts of land along the Grand River. Norton remained influential in the Mohawk community. He traveled to Britain several times until his death in 1831. Norton was an effective tactical leader. His warriors exerted an effect beyond their numbers in several key battles. Norton's meticulously written journal is an excellent source of native sentiment during the conflict.

Red Jacket

Red Jacket was a Seneca diplomat and a renowned orator. His Indian name, Sagoyewatha (He Who Keeps Them Awake) spoke to his oratorical skills. The Seneca fought on the British side during the Revolution. Red Jacket did not establish a reputation as a warrior, however. He served ably as a messenger. The British gave him a soldier's coat in recognition of his service and he wore it proudly. Thus, he became known as Red Jacket to the white settlers in western New York.

After the Revolution, New York authorities forcibly relocated the Seneca to a few reservations including one along Buffalo Creek near the small settlement of Buffalo. As a diplomat, Red Jacket re-

sisted the further diminishment of Seneca lands. When the war began, Red Jacket and other Iroquois leaders in New York decided to be neutral. They recognized that their relatives at the Grand River settlement in Upper Canada might support the British. However, both groups agreed to avoid internecine conflict. Nevertheless, when reports arrived that British forces trespassed on Seneca territory on Grand Island on the Niagara River, the policy of neutrality shifted. Red Jacket's goal was to bolster the Seneca position after the fighting ended. He became persuaded that the best way to achieve this was to participate as an organized ally of the American forces.

In 1814, Major General Jacob Brown was authorized to enlist a body of Iroquois. Red Jacket and other native leaders recruited about 500 warriors. Brown assigned this battalion to the brigade commanded by Brigadier General Peter B. Porter. Porter lived along the Niagara and had represented western New York in the House of Representatives. He and Red Jacket were associates of a sort and worked passably well together. On 5 July 1814, Brown gave Porter the order to scour the forest near the American camp south of the Chippawa River to remove a body of natives allied to the British. Porter led his Indians and a regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers into a desperate fight that took a heavy toll of British Indians and Canadian militiamen. Red Jacket led the Iroquois. In the aftermath, natives on both sides were appalled that Indian had fought Indian and Red Jacket led his battalion back to New York. His actions in support of the American cause earned some degree of respect for the Seneca, but not enough to save all their lands in the years following the war. Today, the Seneca reside in a number of small reservations scattered about western New York.

Red Jacket met with three American presidents. His speeches were often translated and printed in American newspapers. He was a celebrity of his time, perhaps the Seneca best known to the white citizenry.

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